

Ethics board fines Macon mayor over campaign cash

Other local officials, ballot group also penalized

BY LAURA E. CORLEY
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The Georgia Ethics Commission fined Macon-Bibb County Mayor Lester Miller on Wednesday for violating Georgia campaign finance laws by transferring nearly a quarter million dollars in excess campaign contributions to a nonprofit organization in which he had a controlling interest.

Miller, who was elected in 2020 and re-elected in 2024, was fined \$5,000 for five separate violations that occurred over a period of four months last year.

The state's investigation found Miller transferred a total of \$220,000 in excess campaign contributions from his campaign to Advance Alliance of Georgia Action Fund, a nonprofit he helped create in 2023, on five different occasions between March and June 2024. Miller is listed as the nonprofit's CEO but told the commission he doesn't have a controlling interest in it.

Earlier this year, Miller told The Melody the purpose of Advance Alliance was to promote "civic engagement and policy advocacy in the areas of public safety, education, economic development and good governance."

Miller disputed that he knowingly or intentionally violated campaign finance laws but cooperated with the commission's investigation and "explained that these alleged violations were inadvertent, and at all times he



PHOTO BY JASON VORHEES
Mayor Lester Miller speaks before a blighted structure demolition on Holt Avenue in April 2024. On Wednesday, state ethics officials fined Miller for multiple campaign finance violations.

believed he was operating within campaign finance law," according to the consent order approved by the ethics commission Wednesday. Miller withdrew those defenses in the interest of resolving the matter.

The mayor told the state he was relying on the Black's Law Dictionary definition of controlling interest, which means a greater-than-50% ownership in an enterprise, in creating the action fund. He also said all the money was spent legally and part of it went to "political purposes" and "research and advocacy regarding violence prevention best practices, mental health policy, tax policy, economic development strategies" plus legal expenses related to the setup of the fund, according to the consent order.

A Melody investigation in April found Miller filtered at least \$100,000 through different organizations to support and oppose certain candidates for local and state offices. Most candidates targeted for support and opposition said they were unaware of money spent to influence the outcome of their races.

Other Macon leaders also fined
Miller wasn't the only public office holder in Macon to be fined by the ethics commission at its meeting in Savannah on Wednesday. State Rep. Miriam Paris, D-Macon, was fined \$500 for failing to file personal financial disclosure reports

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PHOTOS BY JASON VORHEES
Rocker Duane Allman's former residence on Bond Street is now available for short-term rentals on Airbnb.

Historic house where Allman lived hits Airbnb

BY CASEY CHOUNG
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Fans of rock music can now stay in Duane Allman's one-time residence.

The two-story, bright orange house — located at 1125 Bond St. — was recently listed on the Airbnb online homestays service by its owners, Ed and Angie Hubbard. The 3,500-square-foot residence can sleep up to 11 guests for a price tag of around \$1,000 per night, according to the listing.

The Hubbards visited Macon in 2019 and enjoyed how "accessible" live music was in the city, Ed said. Ed is a longtime fan of the Allmans and was eager to visit The Big House, home to the band's museum.

The couple decided to move

to Macon from Greenville, South Carolina, in 2024. They bought the Bond Street house for \$406,000 and spent six months making minor fixes.

"It's a quirky old house," Ed said.

The home — built in 1890 — is stuffed with local art and furniture, including a reclaimed wood picnic table that anchors the dining room. Record covers layer the ceiling in one room, and concert posters, paintings and vinyl can be found on walls throughout the house. A mural by local artist Kevin Lewis wraps around the inside of the stairwell, and a stained glass window casts colorful reflections.

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Rising costs put Macon Pops Christmas show at risk



PHOTO BY JESSICA GRATIGNY
Amy Moretti plays in the Macon Pops Christmas Spectacular concert in November 2024. Due to rising costs, the nonprofit organization is considering canceling the 2025 Spectacular.

BY EVELYN DAVIDSON
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The annual Macon Pops concert that opens the highly anticipated Christmas Light Extravaganza draws thousands of spectators, but the nonprofit organization's Christmas Spectacular might not return this season.

A staple of Macon's downtown holiday festivities since 2018, the concert has grown too large for Macon Pops to afford, said co-founder and CEO Steve Moretti.

Despite being free for attendees, the nonprofit must cover expenses ranging from performer and security pay to stage construction.

The concert kicks off a monthlong series of nightly displays showcas-

ing more than a million lights — blanketing five and a half blocks of downtown Macon — synchronized to recorded holiday music by Macon Pops.

"This is one of the most amazing things that any of us have ever done and been a part of," Moretti said. "But in order to sustain it, we need help from the community."

The organization has recorded 32 songs over the years. Studio recording costs are another expense, he noted.

"Without the music, it wouldn't make the lights as unique," Moretti said.

He added that the fate of this year's Christmas concert is still "unknown."

To support the costs, the nonprofit

it pursues year-round fundraising efforts, soliciting business sponsorships and donations from community members.

The group also brings in some revenue from an ongoing concert series.

Costs have increased significantly since the pandemic, Moretti said.

The first concert in 2018 cost half of what it takes to put on the show in 2025.

The group only raised \$75 from attendees at last year's Christmas concert, said Lindsey Mote, the organization's marketing director.

Moretti said that if each of the nearly 40,000 attendees from last

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Periodical — Mail Label

Edge explores 'quest for home' in new book

BY ED GRISAMORE
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There was a time when John T. Edge could walk through an airport without someone recognizing him. Or go incognito to a restaurant with his wife.

But when you're the author of 10 books, write a restaurant column for Garden & Gun magazine and host the Emmy Award-winning "True South" on the SEC Network, ESPN, Disney and Hulu, you have earned yourself a measure of fame.

"If I'm walking through an air-

port, I'll stop and talk to three people," Edge said. "They want to talk to me about our show. In a way, it's not really celebrity. There is a familiarity."

Edge lives in Oxford, Mississippi, but his taproot runs deep in Middle Georgia. He grew up in Clin-

ton, in Jones County, and attended school at Stratford Academy and Tattnell Square in Macon.

"True South" is now in its eighth season. This season's first episode,

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Lane

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HOW TO FIND A HIGH-QUALITY MEMORY CARE FACILITY



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When a loved one experiences symptoms of Alzheimer's, dementia, and other cognitive disorders that compromise their safety and ability to meet their own daily care needs, family members may consider long-term care. A memory care facility provides specialized care and support that maintains patients' safety and quality of life and helps ease family and friends' worry about their loved one's well-being.

Here's everything you need to know about finding a high-quality memory care facility.

Assisted Living, Nursing Homes, and Continuing Care Retirement Communities

Different types of long-term residential facilities provide different levels of care. Here's a list of common ones and their differences, according to the National Institute on Aging.

- **Assisted Living** — Residents need help with daily living — but not as much help as a nursing home gives. Many facilities offer varying levels of care. Residents usually have their own apartment or room and share common space. They receive three meals daily, personal care assistance, and help with medications. Facilities have housekeeping, laundry, recreational activities, security, and on-site staff.
- **Nursing Homes (aka Skilled Nursing Facilities)** — Health and personal care services include 24-hour supervision, nursing care, three meals a day, and help with daily living activities. Some temporary rehabilitation residents receive physical, occupational, or speech therapy after surgery or injury. Patients who require constant care and supervision due to ongoing physical or mental conditions are permanent residents.
- **Continuing Care Retirement Communities (CCRCs)** — These communities offer multiple services in one location, including independent housing, assisted living, and skilled nursing. As care needs change, residents transfer within the community.

What is Memory Care?

Memory care is a subset of assisted living and nursing home care, according to Forbes Health. Staff members at a memory care facility provide specialized care "to meet the specific social, medical and safety needs of people who have dementia or some form of cognitive impairment."

As dementia progresses, patients require higher levels of care. Memory care staff members are specifically trained to handle the challenges people with dementia or Alzheimer's face. Patients follow structured routines in a safe environment at the facility. Staff members check residents frequently and provide extra support, according to AARP.

Because six in 10 people living with dementia will wander, safety features at memory care facilities include door alarms, elevators with passcodes, and enclosed outdoor areas.

How to Find High-Quality Memory Care Facilities Near You

Finding the best memory care facility near you is essential for your loved one's safety and quality of life. These sources are an excellent place to start your search.

- **Primary Care Physician** — Consulting a patient's primary care physician is a great place to start when searching for a memory care facility. They've built a relationship with your loved one and understand their unique medical needs. Ask the PCP for a list of facilities that best meet those needs.
- **Online Long-Term Care Directories** — There are several online directories for long-term care facilities. Check Housing Options on AARP and Alzheimer's Association's Community Resource Finder. Under Skilled Nursing facilities, look for ones that offer memory care. Browse Medicare's Nursing Home Compare website. Visit The Joint Commission's Quality Check website to find Gold Seal memory care facilities by state, city, or zip code, and check Eldercare Locator from the U.S. Administration on Aging.

Visit Multiple Facilities Multiple Times

Once you create a list of potential memory care facilities, visit each to watch operations at different times of day, including the evening, and varying days of the week, experts suggest to AARP. You should also bring your loved one to see how they respond to the setting and staff, says Lisa Grod, Ph.D., and gerontologist via Forbes Health.

During each visit, notice how staff members respond to residents. Are they prompt, courteous, and helpful? Do they seem calm or frazzled? Is the facility adequately staffed to accommodate the number of residents?

Factors to Consider at Each Facility

A high-quality memory care facility should always put the needs and safety of its residents first. As you tour each facility, consider these crucial factors.

- **Staff training** — Are personnel knowledgeable, friendly, and equipped to help dementia patients? How many staff members work there? What is the staff-to-resident ratio?
- **Environment** — Is the facility clean and inviting? Do residents look clean and cared for? What are mealtimes like? What are residents' rooms like? Are there common social spaces, including safe outdoor spaces?
- **Medical care** — Does the facility provide on-site medical care? If yes, what type of care do they give, and when do residents go to the hospital for care? Is there an on-site doctor? How often do they visit residents?
- **Safety** — What are the safety and security measures? How does the facility prevent wandering? Social activities — Does the facility offer social activities for residents, like games, music and art therapy, dancing, and singing?
- **Cost** — What are the total costs for residential care? What services does long-term insurance or Medicaid cover? What are the out-of-pocket costs? What services cost extra? Ultimately, finding the right fit for a memory care facility can help your loved one thrive and give you peace of mind about their comfort, safety, and well-being.



PHOTO BY LIZ FABIAN OF THE MACON NEWSROOM

Leaders of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation tour a house that was once owned by political leader and pharmacist DeWitt McCrary. The home could be the their cultural center.

Tribe plans return to ancestral lands with Macon cultural hub

BY LIZ FABIAN
The Macon Newsroom

When Muscogee (Creek) Nation Principal Chief David Hill recently toured the 1865 home of an early settler of East Macon, he paid almost as much attention to the backyard — the land.

A little more than two centuries ago, his ancestors were forced off it, away from the banks of the Ocmulgee River to resettle out west in what is now Tulsa, Oklahoma. Now, they want to come back and establish offices in Macon on the outskirts of what still is expected to become Georgia's first national park at the Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park.

They are looking at building a cultural center in the former home of "East Ma-

con's first citizen," DeWitt McCrary, who served 12 terms as an alderman of the city of Macon and three terms on the Bibb County Commission.

While the nation plans to be integral in managing the cultural aspects of a national park, they also want to tell history from their own perspective.

"You don't see that in the history books, but this just gives us an opportunity to tell the true history of it," said Hill, who was in town for the Ocmulgee Mounds Indigenous Celebration. "That's what we want to do, just educate people who we are, who Muscogee people are. So, I'm very excited."

His former chief of staff, Tracie Revis, now the director of advocacy for the

Macon-based Ocmulgee National Park & Preserve Initiative, escorted the visiting delegation that included current Chief of Staff Jeff Fife and nation Council Speaker Randall Hicks.

Revis explained that the site at 320 Hydrolia St. is prime real estate for anyone coming to Ocmulgee Mounds off of Interstate 16 as the historic home is near the current back gate to the park, which is expected to become a main entrance in the expansion.

"When you turn in, you would see us, right?" Revis explained. "Imagine our flag flying, our story, we get to control this, do what we want in this space."

While the view from the

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year's event donated just \$2, the proceeds would cover the entire cost of the event, which is \$75,000.

The opening concert and subsequent nightly light shows garnered a total of 685,000 visitors from Macon and beyond and resulted in a \$7.1 million economic impact last year, according to Visit Macon data.

"We don't see any bit of that revenue," he said.

Visit Macon donated some money toward the group's regular season over the last two years, but to again put on the holiday show, Moretti said they would need a sponsor to donate \$25,000 for their biggest expense: stage construction.

Putting money earned from the nonprofit's other concerts

into the Christmas concert is not sustainable moving forward, he said. He said diverting that revenue jeopardizes the organization's future projects.

"We also don't want to be put in a position that we can't carry out the rest of our season because of this," Mote said.

Moretti founded the non-traditional symphonic pop organization in 2013 alongside Grammy Award-winning composer and performer Matt Catingub.

For the first Christmas Light Extravaganza in 2017, Moretti and Catingub collaborated with the organizer behind the lights, Bryan Nichols, to produce and record 12 original arrangements of holiday classics to accompany the lights.

The next year, Macon Pops received a grant to help

launch the first Christmas concert.

Recording and producing more than 30 songs would cost a quarter of a million dollars if done by a professional company, Moretti said.

He said Macon Pops has donated an estimated \$700,000-750,000 to hosting the holiday concert over the past nine years.

The Christmas Light Extravaganza could continue without the musical arrangements of Macon Pops, but radio music wouldn't honor Macon's rich music history and "continue the next chapter of our music history book," he said.

"We want the city to do well," Mote said. "We want downtown to do well. We are happy to be a part — we just need help to make it happen."

The organization accepts donations at maconpops.com.

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for 2022 and 2023. Paris told the ethics commission she inadvertently missed the filings when the state adopted a new filing system in 2022, according to the consent order. Paris filed the missing reports immediately when contacted by the state.

Macon Water Authority Board Chair Gary Bechtel was fined \$1,500 for failing to file five campaign finance disclosure reports between September 2022 and December 2024. He also did not file the required yearly personal financial disclosure in 2021, 2022 and 2023.

Bechtel told the ethics commission that he inadvertently missed the filings and "moving forward, he has a better understanding of the required filings for his elective office," according to the

consent order. Bechtel was elected chairman of the water authority board in 2022. He has previously served on the water board, the school board and county commission.

Ballot group fined over agency gift

Also Wednesday, the ethics commission fined Go Big for Macon, a ballot question committee formed to promote passage of the 2025 Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax, for accepting a \$50,000 contribution from the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority. Go Big for Macon raised \$85,000 to promote voter approval of the penny-on-the-dollar sales tax.

The General Assembly instituted a ban on government agencies making contributions to campaigns or committees, and Go Big for Macon was fined \$1,500 for

accepting the industrial authority's dollars. Go Big for Macon denied it knowingly or intentionally violated the law.

Only about 6,230 voters cast ballots in the March election in which the SPLOST was the only item on the ballot. More than 5,180 people voted in favor of it and 1,050 voted against it for a voter turnout of about 5.2%. The 2025 SPLOST will raise \$450 million for public projects related to public safety, recreation, road paving, private sector growth and economic development.

In its June meeting in Athens, the ethics commission found the Macon-Bibb County Industrial Authority acted in good faith and imposed no monetary fine, but the authority agreed to have a written agreement guaranteeing money it contributes will only be used for voter education.

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Allman, a famed rock and blues guitarist who founded the Allman Brothers Band in 1969, lived in the residence with his girlfriend Donna and their child Galadrielle. Before his stay there, he lived at the Hippie Crash Pad on College Street.

In the foyer is a shrine to the musician. It features small ornaments, pamphlets from Visit Macon, Capricorn Studios and The Big House, and even a menu from H&H, the soul food restaurant known for its Allman Brothers connection.

“We wanted to give folks a place to learn about Macon,” Ed said of the shrine.

The Hubbards recently hosted an open house in partnership with the Historic Macon Foundation, and, next June, the couple plans to lend the house to the Otis Redding Foundation as temporary lodging for visiting musicians.

“Macon is just the right size of community for us — not too big, not too small,” Angie said.



How the Allman brothers found their sound in Macon

BY CASEY CHOUNG
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Before reaching Macon and the house on Bond Street, the Allman Brothers Band came together in Jacksonville.

Otis Redding’s manager Phil Walden scouted Duane Allman while the rocker was playing in the Florida city. Allman then began assembling the Allman Brothers Band, starting with drummer Jaimoe and then adding Dickey Betts, Berry Oakley and Butch Trucks before finally joining up with Duane’s brother Gregg.

Kirk West, the band’s former assistant tour manager, said the brothers moved to Macon in March 1969 and stayed at the Hippie Crash Pad on College Street — next to where Hotel 1842 is now.

“Young bands, they need to be together all the time or they never

actually gel,” West said. “They were developing music and they needed intense interaction.”

The band played its first gig in May 1969 at The College Discotheque on Mulberry Street. Duane was the first to move out of the Hippie Crash Pad. Oakley and Trucks followed. The band would later reunite at The Big House on Vineville Avenue, where they lived there until 1973. In 2009, an interactive museum spotlighting the band opened in the former residence.

There was barely a rock ‘n’ roll scene in Macon when the band arrived — except for one local band, “Boogie Chillen,” West said.

West recalled Duane Allman being asked about the band’s choice to locate in Macon.

“There’s not a damn thing going on down here,” Allman responded.

West said the lack of distraction

helped the band focus on their music.

“The music industry came because they were here,” he said.

West and his wife Kirsten bought The Big House in 1993. They lived there for 14 years before deciding to make it a museum.

He photographed the band during their performances and later produced archival releases with tapes he found over the years.

“The relationship and my involvement with the Allman Brothers Band is basically the greatest thing that’s happened to me — except for my wife,” he said.

ABOVE AND AT RIGHT: Angie and Ed Hubbard stand inside their Bond Street home near murals of former resident Duane Allman. The house is now available for short-term rental.



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The gospel according to Andy, Barney, Opie and Aunt Bee

Susan Cable grew up watching “The Andy Griffith Show.” And whenever she visited her mother’s hometown of Mount Airy, North Carolina, it was as if she were staying in the house next door to Andy, Barney, Opie and Aunt Bee.

“I would go there every summer,” she said. “It was like being in an episode in Mayberry.”

Mount Airy was Griffith’s hometown and served as the inspiration for the fictional Mayberry.

Cable is a former state senator from Macon and once served as president of the Bibb County school board. Her mother, Ruth Goad Watt, now lives in Macon. She celebrated her 100th birthday this past December.

“She sang in the choir with Andy Griffith at the Moravian church in Mount Airy,” Cable said. “She would show me the house where Andy Griffith lived, next to the water tower. It was a lovely place. I have nothing but fond memories.”

Her uncle, Jimmy Goad, was one of Griffith’s best friends.



Ed GRISAMORE

He visited him in Hollywood when the show was popular in the 1960s.

Cable had two other uncles who worked for the police department in Mount Airy. She said her Uncle Gil was just like Barney, and her Uncle Howard reminded her of Andy.

Every fall, thousands of Andy Griffith Show fans make the pilgrimage to Mount Airy for Mayberry Days. This year’s festival is Sept. 22-28, when the town about 100 miles north of Charlotte steps back in time.

Some folks go hoping to find Wal-ly’s Filling Station and Ernest T. Bass. David Browning, who spent 32 years patrolling the downtown streets dressed as Deputy Barney Fife during the festival, said they have to settle for something else.

“The Andy Griffith Show was something everyone believed in,” Browning told me. “But it was

filmed on a back lot in Hollywood. So, instead of looking for a place, people have to come here looking for a feeling.”

The TV series, of course, never set foot here. The stage was all Hollywood. Even the sacred fishing hole, shown during all that whistling in the opening credits, is 2,129 miles away in Franklin Canyon in the heart of Los Angeles.

It has been 35 years since the inaugural Mayberry Days in 1990, started in celebration of the show’s 30th anniversary. It premiered on Oct. 3, 1960. There were 249 episodes over eight seasons. Sadly, most of the beloved characters are no longer with us.

I’ve had Mayberry Days on my mind these past few weeks. The only time I have attended was 25 years ago this month.

I tagged along with Kenny Burgamy, Ben Sandifer and Jimmy Jones. They were local radio guys and such devoted Mayberriens they should have been given a key to the city.

We stayed at the Mayberry Motor

Inn on the outskirts of town, where the lady at the front desk insisted we call her Aunt Bee.

When in Mayberry, do as Andy did. So we waited in line for pork chop sandwiches at the Snappy Lunch diner, made famous by a single line in “Andy the Matchmaker,” an episode in the first season.

Charles Dowell started working at Snappy in 1943 at the age of 14. He told me he remembered when a young Griffith rode his bike to the diner. Griffith used to brag that his mother could give him a quarter, and he could go to the picture show and have enough left over to walk across the street to Snappy for a hot dog and a bottle of pop.

The City Barber Shop on Main Street was the inspiration for Floyd’s Barber Shop. I got to interview Russell Hiatt, who used to cut Griffith’s hair and was later inducted into the National Barber Hall of Fame in Chicago. He was a fan favorite during the festival, graciously posing for photographs and smiling when folks called him “Floyd.”

I also got to meet Jim Clark, who was born the same year the show started coming into America’s living rooms in black and white. When he was in college at Vanderbilt, he founded TAGSRWC (The Andy Griffith Show Rerun Watcher’s Club) which now has more than 1,400 chapters and 20,000 members worldwide.

I used to wonder why the bus that rolled through the fictitious Mayberry had “MACON” on its destination marquee. I assumed it might be Macon, North Carolina.

But Clark, who authored several books about the TV series, said that based on his research, the bus was likely headed to Macon, Georgia.

The show had at least two other Macon connections. Actor Sam Edwards, who was born in Macon in 1915, appeared in five episodes in the show’s early years. And Ted Turner, who got his career started in Macon at his father’s advertising

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NEW SOUTHERN DAD

Bedtime is the best time of the day — and science confirms

I am a morning person, and I’ve always been.

Waking up early, I always have the feeling that I can conquer the world, and there is little that I can’t accomplish before lunch.

After about 2 p.m., though? I’m not worth a cuss. Even as a parent, I’m better suited to the early hours of the day.

By dark, I’m simply out of love to give.

Getting up early in the morning often requires earlier bedtimes. Was it Ben Franklin that quipped, “Early to bed, early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy and wise?” I don’t know about the wise part, but I feel



Kyle DOMINY

There are few better feelings than calling the day finished and checking out for some well-deserved rest. But apparently going to bed makes some people so giddy they report having a happiness attack.

I’ve heard of heart attacks, anxiety attacks and cyber-attacks, but never happiness attacks. The notion

pretty good most days. I’m also waiting for the wealth part. Maybe you make more money if you work efficiently from 2 to 5 p.m.? Maybe a night shift?

is trending across social media, as things are wont to do these days.

People the world over are reporting feelings of elation and giddiness as they climb into bed each day. It seems that the favorite part of many people’s day, in a world of ever-increasing worry and mental struggles, is being unconscious.

There is some science to the phenomenon as well.

Sleep experts say such feelings are normal and quite frequent and can be caused by the sense of completion felt by the end of a busy day or feelings of safety knowing you are about to be snug and comfy in your own bed.

I’ll assume that the bulk of folks posting or live streaming their pre-bedtime euphoria don’t have children to wake them up in the middle of the night.

Happy attacks do not correlate with a good night’s sleep, however. Just because wrapping up in the covers brings a deep sense of relief, you very well could spend the night tossing and turning in a state of fitful semi-rest. I’m sure the online influencers have sleep hacks galore available for view across social media if you are interested in that sort of thing.

In my case sleep is interrupted by a kick from the dog or child that

still readily crawls in my bed most nights.

I’m told I’ll miss that one day, and I’m sure I will, but right now, I’ll take a solid eight hours.

I can’t say I’ve ever experienced a happy attack. I like to think I’m a generally happy person and therefore no singular thing could invoke such a flood of emotions — though I am looking forward to bedtime. So, if you need me for anything, you better reach out before lunch, otherwise I can’t make you any promises. See you in the morning.

Kyle Dominy is a reporter based in Dublin.

Georgia shouldn’t follow New York’s embrace of democratic socialism

News of New York City’s mayoral race has been difficult to escape, even as far away as Georgia where progressives have been gleefully applauding the youthful and charismatic Democratic nominee Zohran Mamdani. A recent opinion piece from a Georgia lawmaker even seemed to glorify Mamdani and suggest Georgia needs politicians like him and his policies.

Who New Yorkers ultimately choose as their next mayor matters little to me. That’s entirely up to them, and considering Mamdani garnered 43.5% of the vote in the Democratic primary in a very Democratic city, Mamdani must be viewed as the frontrunner. Again, if that’s what New Yorkers want, then go for it, but what should worry readers is the effort to import Mamdani’s ideas to the Peach State.

Mamdani cruised to an easy primary victory thanks to his self-proclaimed democratic socialist platform. He promised to “freeze the rent for all stabilized tenants,” “create a network of city-owned grocery stores focused on keeping prices low” and bring “the NYC wage floor up to \$30/hour.” National Review additionally noted that Mam-



Marc HYDEN

Woah, comrade. There’s a lot to unpack there, and these are some truly terrible public policies — some in response to real issues. According to Apartments.com, the average rent for a 591-square-foot apartment in New York City is over \$4,000 a month. That’s astounding, and Mamdani rightly sees affordability as a persistent issue and thus wants to freeze certain rents. However, this is an uninformed idea.

“Decades of academic research shows that capping rent increases below market rates results in demand outstripping supply for rental accommodation,” the libertarian think tank Cato Institute reported. “Incumbent tenants cling more tightly to their cheaper property, meaning fewer dwellings on the market [and] longer searches [...] Less tenant churn means many households simply can’t find properties reflecting their family or job needs.”

dani earlier “called for exacerbating ‘class consciousness’ with the ‘end goal’ of ‘seizing the means of production.’”

A recent experiment demonstrates the folly of freezing rents.

In Argentina, President Javier Milei repealed their rent control law, and the results have been stunning so far. “Traditional rental listings have skyrocketed — from 5,500 before the reform to 15,300 today, a staggering 180% rise,” the Cato Institute added. “Real (i.e. inflation-adjusted) rents have fallen, short-term workarounds are declining and tenants are finding properties suited to their needs.”

Mamdani’s proposal to increase the minimum wage is also fraught with problems. “Raising the minimum wage would increase the cost of employing low-wage workers,” the Congressional Budget Office noted. “As a result, some employers would employ fewer workers than they would have employed under a lower minimum wage.”

Employers would then either pass the increased wage costs to consumers — leading to price increases — and/or replace workers with cheaper machines. In fact, CNN reported last year, “California just hiked minimum wage for fast food workers. Some restaurants are replacing them with kiosks.”

If some democratic-socialists get their way, then many of the kiosks might not be the primary pain point because they want the government to own and control a number of grocery stores. This would be a disaster-in-the-making, unless you’re a fan of bread lines, and I am not. Governments are terrible at operating businesses. Nevertheless, plenty of them have tinkered with the idea of state-run grocery stores, and the Soviet Union’s experiment with them proved their failure. Its people were often left to deal with barren shelves and long lines for morsels of food.

This issue was even magnified when then-Soviet official Boris Yeltsin visited a grocery store in the U.S.

“Yeltsin, then 58, ‘roamed the aisles of Randall’s nodding his head in amazement,’” the House Chronicle reported. “He told his fellow Russians in his entourage that if their people, who often must wait in line for most goods, saw the conditions of U.S. supermarkets, ‘there would be a revolution.’”

In the Chronicle photos, you can see him marveling at the produce section, the fresh fish market and the

checkout counter. He looked especially excited about frozen pudding pops.

In order to hide the results of the USSR’s failed policies from foreign-ers, the Soviets even created commercial Potemkin villages — or fabricated developments intended to falsely show a cornucopia of available goods.

Despite the truth about these policies, some activists and officials seem determined to enact them in Georgia, which would be a detrimental mistake.

Thankfully, the political makeup of the Peach State makes this a non-starter for the foreseeable future.

That aside, most Americans understandably want better wages and more affordable housing and groceries, but the answer to these desires shouldn’t exacerbate the problems.

We need freer markets, not more government control. That’s why we cannot import Mamdani’s ideas to Georgia.

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

EDGE

Continued from Page A1

which aired on Sept. 2, took him on a pilgrimage to the house where he grew up in historic Clinton.

It also features a trip to Nu-Way Weiners on Hillcrest Boulevard in Macon and to Fresh Air Bar-B-Que south of Jackson.

In the episode, Edge, 62, discusses his new memoir, “House of Smoke: A Southerner Goes Searching for Home” and his quest for meaning in a region that has “both held him close and pushed him away.”

The book’s release date is Sept. 16 in Oxford. His book tour also begins that day, running through the end of October and including 24 cities and 27 different venues.

“It’s a tour of the Deep South, the SEC footprint,” Edge said. “It’s a way to be in conversation with the people who watch ‘True South.’ Hopefully, we can talk about their families, as well as mine ... and their South, as well as mine.”

Edge will be in Birmingham on Sept. 17, Chattanooga on Sept. 18 and Atlanta on Sept. 22.

The author will give a lecture and have a book signing at the Hay House in Macon on Sept. 23. He will be joined by Josephine Bennett, senior director of news and partnerships at Georgia Public Broadcasting.

The ticketed event is \$30 for the lecture and a copy of the book or \$10 for the lecture only. Bear’s Books on Forsyth Street is hosting the book event. The doors open at 5:30 p.m. with the lecture starting 30 minutes later.

The Melody recently interviewed Edge about his book.

Was this a book you were always going to write and needed to be written?

I recognized that this story I’ve told — and should be told — was powerful enough and relatable enough to be worthy of a book. It was around 2020, so it was five years in the making. But I lived a life before I figured out my life was perhaps worth examining so that others might find some inspiration in their own searches. It took me a long time to figure that out.

Do you believe it has been writing itself all along, and you reached the point that this was the time to do it?

It was really important to me. I’m 62 years old and, as you know from reading the book, there are many ways in which the South’s peculiar history haunted me. The “Lost Cause” shadow cast a pall over my own story and the particular history of my family. In writing about my own story, I could offer readers a path to reckon with their own stories. Writing a memoir, if you try to do it right, is not an act of selfishness but an act of generosity. And that’s the spirit in which I tried to write this.

Did it take the sum of your life experiences to be able to tell the story from the perspective that you did?

I don’t know if it’s the sum of them. I’ve been teaching the MFA (Master of Fine Arts) program at the University of Georgia since 2015. Valerie Boyd founded it. And at the beginning of the book (the dedication), it says: For VBH and VJB. VBH is my wife, Vivian Blair Hobbs, and VJB is Valerie June Boyd.

Valerie invited me to teach in that program at the University of Georgia — the university I had flunked out of, and to be a mentor (in narrative

nonfiction). She gave me a fancy title. When she did that, she gave me a way to come back home, to return to Athens and make good on the education I squandered the first time around.

That was just so powerful for me to step into a classroom in Athens and teach people who were my peers. It’s a low-residency program, so these are people my age and the same level of accomplishments. I was stepping back in as a teacher as somebody who had flunked out of that college. That mattered to me so much, and then Valerie’s belief in the power of stories and narratives inspired me in many ways to see the power that lurked in my own story.

So I don’t know if it was the sum of my life experience. It was the nurturing and example that Valerie offered that set me on this path. There were a number of different things that set me on this path. There was an Oxford American piece I wrote called “My Mother’s Catfish Stew.” People reacted to that story and said things to me like, “My mother’s drug was barbiturates, and I grew up in Texas, but reading your story about your mother helped me find a way to reconcile with my own.” That was another signal.

But I still pushed my story aside. It took making “True South” when we did an episode in Season 3 that was set in my mother’s hometown of Bowman, South Carolina. I was in conversation there with my colleague, Wright Thompson, who is our executive producer and Tim Horgan, our director. As we were writing that episode and talking about what are the messages conveyed, I realized that for much of my life when I told myself I was running toward the next discovery, the next place, the next person I might write about, I was in so many ways running away from my past — the story of my family and the story of the South.

When we made that episode in 2020, and I began writing this book and taking advantage of the lessons that Valerie taught me, I quit running and recognized I needed to return to the place that made me and claim the place I live now.

Did writing it help you make peace with the heavy parts of your story?

I don’t think of writing as therapeutic. The therapeutic effect is an ancillary product of the writing. Writing is writing. It’s stacking scenes one after another, trying to stay in the scene and tell a story. The exercise of stacking those scenes up to tell a story, of establishing cause and effect in your own life, helps you figure out the through line and helps you see the decisions you made, the repercussions of those decisions and there’s a lot to learn in that. You see patterns. You see ridiculous repetitions of the same mistake. And you understand moments of growth and how they often come from crises.

I’ve known you for a long time, and I learned some things about you that I did not know. Will it be that way for others who grew up with you or knew you at different times in your life?

I think with the likely exception of my wife and our son and a few really close friends, much of this story will be new to readers. I’ve spent a career, for the most part, focused on telling other people’s stories, looking outside myself to honor the lives and work of others. And that

was purposeful. That’s what I thought the good work to be done was. But I also came to realize in my late 50s that my story may also be of service to others.

Going back to what you mentioned earlier, I’m going to ask you to dial it back about 40 years to that wild, UGA frat boy with a 1.8 GPA. Could that version of John T. Edge have ever imagined he would one day be an author and have his own television show?

No. I think this is one of those things people can identify with. For many of us, we get lost in college. Sometimes there’s a good result from that. You get lost in college, then you find your path, you find your tribe and you emerge with a better sense of your own identity, dreams and beliefs. I stayed lost a little bit longer in those. I think it’s important to say this. There are successful people across every industry and educational institution you can imagine who have stories that are comparable to mine. If our fellow humans give us grace, we are afforded second and third chances, and I believe life boils down to what you do with those second and third chances.

With a book, you don’t always know what the author looks like unless you see the book jacket. Do people now recognize you now because of the TV show? Do they know your name?

Yeah, it’s kind of beautiful. If I’m walking through an airport, I’ll stop and talk to three people. They want to talk to me about our show. In a way, it’s not really celebrity. There is a familiarity. I show up on their television screens and tell them a story about a place they know or are curious about and want to know. In the first episode of this season, I focus on Clinton, Macon, and Jackson, Georgia. I reveal some things about myself. In that, there’s a bond created.

I got this beautiful email from a woman just this week who lost her son to a gunshot, and she told me that watching our show was kind of a balm for her, that it helped get her through tough times. I’ve heard from people who watched the show we made on Lake Village, Arkansas, a city struggling to find a new economic path forward, with beautiful people doing that work. They tell me that it reminds them of their town in Kentucky or Florida. Wherever it may be, people respond to our show in an emotional and intimate way. So when I run into people who watch the show and want to talk about it, they want to talk about that.

That has to be gratifying.

It is. As Southerners, we have this sense of connectivity, this belief that if we drill down just a bit, we can find a friend in common, an experience in common, a favorite restaurant in common. The show is like an exposition of that. I think that’s part of what people respond to, the intimacy of this region. And I think they respond to our attempt to show the South for what it is instead of depending upon stereotypes and myths and moonlight and magnolias.

If you were on death row, what would be your last meal?

I get to time travel, right? It would be a barbecue sandwich, drenched in that red vinegar sauce, Brunswick stew and a cold Mountain Dew from Old Clinton Barbecue, circa 1970s.



PHOTO BY ERIC AUSTEN ABBOTT AND SPECIAL TO THE MELODY
Author and television host John T. Edge writes as he prepares for the Sept. 16 release of his new memoir. He will sign books Sept. 23 at the Hay House in Macon.

Theatre Macon pilots ‘Dragons’

BY EVELYN DAVIDSON
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Theatre Macon’s youth actors will soar to new heights this month, bringing “How to Train Your Dragon Jr.” to the Southeast for the first time.

Only a handful of other theaters across the country have run pilot productions of the DreamWorks Theatricals musical.

“There is no blueprint of what the show should look like or how the show should be staged, so we have a lot of creative freedom,” Richard Frazier-Sostillio, Theatre Macon’s artistic director, said.

Based on the 2003 novel “How to Train Your Dragon” and its 2010 film adaptation, the musical follows the story of Hiccup, a young Viking from a community of dragon-slayers who stumbles upon a rare dragon named Toothless and stands up against his community’s animosity towards the massive, winged creatures.

The film offers Frazier-Sostillio and his cast of young actors, ranging from 8 to 18, their only reference point for the creative development of the live show. Photos, notes and ideas from Theatre Macon will contribute to scripts and director’s guides used in future productions of the show.

Theatre Macon has put on other pilot productions in the past, including “Beetlejuice Jr.” and “Matilda the Musical.”

Curating a cinematic experience for the audience is a key focus for the live production, Frazier-Sostillio said.

He began with a “sky is the limit” approach to special effects, set design and costuming. He then narrowed his ideas to what would be feasible. The goal is to make the show adaptable in scale and financially accessible to school, community and church theater programs, he said.

“One of the challenging parts was definitely having to learn all this brand-new stuff that not a whole lot of theaters have

ever done before,” said Sterling Gray Grisamore, 10, who plays Snotlout.

With the help of parents, volunteers, and Theatre Macon’s scenic and costume designers, Frazier-Sostillio created 12 large-scale dragon puppets with moveable wings that the young actors will bring to life on stage. The puppets — constructed from EVA foam and PVC pipes — range from 6-8 feet tall. Some will extend 4 feet above the actors’ heads.

Andy Martinez-Lopez, 17, plays Toothless and is learning to embrace the role of puppeteer.

“I’ve only acted as my person, but I’m acting through a puppet and it’s very new to me,” he said. “It’s making me a better actor.”

Maggie Greer, 15, said singing alto and mastering the physical skills — wielding a shield and sword — as her young Viking character, Astrid, have been her biggest challenges in the production process.

The show, which runs for 45 minutes, will utilize projections and 4D effects. Actors will move around the audience and even “fly” to provide a perspective similar to the movie.

Underneath the towering costumes and special effects are powerful messages about “mob mentality” and “blazing your own trail,” Frazier-Sostillio said.

“In a world with so much noise, it’s more important than ever to look inside of ourselves and say, ‘Well, how do I feel about these things?’” he said. “How do these things affect me, and how am I championing our world and making it a better place?”

The production runs for two weekends from Sept. 19-28. Visit theatremacon.com to purchase tickets.

Editor’s note: One of the actors quoted in this story is the granddaughter of a Melody staff member.

Engagement and Wedding Announcements

Morgan and Harper to wed in April

Amy Morgan is excited to announce her engagement to her fiancé Lt. Thomas Harper, M.D. both of Macon.

The bride is the daughter of Fred Morgan III and Susan Morgan, of Swainsboro and Warner Robins. She is the granddaughter of Roger and Doris Alligood of Warner Robins and Doris and Fred Morgan II of Swainsboro.

The bride attended The University of Georgia, where she received her Bachelor’s in Early Childhood Education. She is currently employed as a Teacher at Springdale Elementary School.

The groom is the son of Dr. Kenneth Harper and Terri Harper, of Toccoa and Macon. He is the grandson of Bill and Fay Bennett of Macon, and Paul and Louise Harper of Toccoa.

The groom attended Macon State College, where he received his Bachelor’s in Biology, Georgia College and State University, where he received his Master’s in Biology, and Mercer University School of Medicine, where he received his Doctor of Medicine. He currently works as a Resident Physician in General Surgery at Atrium Navicent Health. He is also a Navy Reserve Medical Corps Officer.

The wedding is set for the bride and groom in April 2026, at the Museum of Arts and Sciences.





MORE PHOTOS FROM DUANE ALLMAN’S FORMER RESIDENCE



PHOTOS BY JASON VORHEES

FROM OUR KITCHENS

From chore to calling

BY MICHELLE HORNADAY
Special to The Melody

My cooking journey began seven years ago.

It was an intense trip with me jumping headlong into learning how to create every restaurant dish I ever enjoyed by doing exhaustive research and watching hundreds of YouTube videos.

I never cared about cooking, not learning from my mom, who was very sick during most of my early life.

As I got older, I simply didn't develop the love most women have for the craft. I actually developed an aversion.

The prep, cook time and clean-up was so exponentially longer than eating the actual meal.

I could not rationalize the effort.

I had never been married, and then I met my husband Alan on a church pew in Macon one wonderful Sunday in January 2018.

We were married six months later.



I made an easy meal for him the first time I invited him to my house. It was crock pot chili. The recipe basically entailed adding lots of different canned beans, crushed tomatoes and ground beef, with some chili powder — very easy and basically effortless. Yet it made Alan so happy.

The sweet appreciation he showed, and the enjoyment he got from the meal I prepared, ignited something in me.

The way to a man's heart appeared to be a solid truth and not just an old adage.

Now that flame has become my passion for cooking. Alan has become my sous chef and together we have loved on literally thousands of folks with meals in and out of our church over

the last seven years. Sometimes I just step back and am in awe at the glory, wonder and sense of humor of our God.

My best friend bought me a plaque over 25 years ago, which read, "The only reason I have a kitchen is because it came with the house," and it still hangs in the kitchen.

It was spot on until I met my "first, last and only husband."

I created a private Facebook page about my cooking journey for my friends, both the novice chefs and seasoned cooks, to share advice and to encourage me and each other to love on people with food.

I just thought it was a good idea to encourage loving others through feeding their most basic need — eating.

This act will provide fellowship, sustenance and friendship.

PICTURED: Alan and Michelle Hornaday married in 2018.

KICKIN' FIXINS CHILI

- 1 large onion, diced.
- 2 tbsp. butter.
- 1 tsp. kosher salt.
- 1 tsp. freshly ground pepper.
- 4 cloves garlic, freshly minced.
- 6 tbsp. tomato paste
- 3/4 cup dry white wine.
- 1 pound lean ground beef/chuck.
- 1 15 oz. can seasoned black beans.
- 1 15 oz. can kidney beans.
- 1 15 oz. can of Chili Fixins Pinto Beans in Chili Sauce.
- 1 15 oz. can petite diced tomatoes.
- 1 10 oz. can Chili Fixins Rotel.
- 1 12 oz. can tomato sauce.
- 1 cup vegetable broth.
- 2 tsp. chili powder
- 2 tsp. cumin.
- 1 tsp. cayenne powder.
- 1 tsp. sugar.

Caramelize one large onion over medium low heat in a large dutch oven in about a tablespoon of butter (this depends on the size of your onion; add more if it starts getting too dry), a teaspoon of kosher salt and a tablespoon of fresh ground black pepper until browned on the edges (about 20 minutes).

Stir in the minced garlic at the end. Cook for about three more minutes. Push that to the edges of the pan. Add the tomato paste to brown in the center of the onions and garlic without stirring for another five minutes. This beautifully intensifies the tomato flavor. Add wine to deglaze pan, stirring everything well and continuing to heat until most of the wine has evaporated.

Add 1 pound of lean ground beef and brown, leaving in little chunks for a flavor-packed bite. Add cans of black beans and kidney beans, Chili Fixins pinto beans in sauce, petite diced tomatoes, Chili Fixins Rotel, tomato sauce, vegetable broth, cumin, chili powder, cayenne pepper and sugar.

Bring to a boil and then simmer covered on low for at least two hours.

GRIS LIST

Odds and ends

BY ED GRISAMORE
gris@maconmelody.com

Ten Books by Tattnall Square Academy graduate John T. Edge:

- "A Gracious Plenty: Recipes and Recollections from the American South" (1999).
- "Southern Belly: The Ultimate Food Lover's Guide to the South" (2002).
- "Fried Chicken: An American Story" (2004).
- "Apple Pie: An American Story" (2004).
- "Hamburgers and Fries: An American Story" (2005).
- "Donuts: An American Passion" (2006).
- "Southern Belly: The Ultimate Food Lovers Companion to the American South" (2012).
- "The Truck Food Cookbook: 150 Recipes and Ramblings from America's Best Restaurants on Wheels" (2012).
- "The Potlikker Papers: A Food History of the Modern South" (2017).
- "House of Smoke: A Southerner Goes Searching for Home" (2025).

Four Oldest Downtown Churches:

- Christ Church (1825).
- First Baptist Church of Christ (1826).
- Mulberry United Methodist (1826).
- First Presbyterian (1826).

Six Platinum Albums by Macon's Jason Aldean:

- "My Kinda Party" (2010), certified quadruple platinum.
- "Night Train" (2012), certified double platinum.
- "Jason Aldean" (2005), certified platinum.
- "Relentless" (2007), certified platinum.
- "Wide Open" (2009), certified platinum.
- "Old Boots, New Dirt" (2014), certified platinum.

Macon's Five U.S. Namesake Cities:

- Macon, North Carolina.
- Macon, Missouri.
- Macon, Mississippi.
- Macon, Michigan.
- Macon, Illinois.

Macon's Five International Sister Cities:

- Macon, France.
- Kurobe, Japan.
- Kaohsiung, Taiwan.
- Ulyanovsk, Russia.
- Elmina, Ghana.

Five Macon Banks That Had Downtown Branches 50 Years Ago (1975):

- Central Bank of Georgia, 756 Poplar Street.
- Citizens & Southern Bank (C&S), 487 Cherry Street.
- Georgia Bank & Trust, 515 Mulberry Street.
- Macon Bank & Trust, 700 Walnut Street.
- First National Bank, 606 Cherry Street.

Fifteen Macon Full-Service Gas Stations From 50 Years Ago (1975):

- Busbee's Service Station, 619 Main Street.
- Sightler's Standard, 2184 Shurling Drive.
- Wansley Service Station, 2006 Vineville Avenue.
- Public Saf-T Oil, 301 Walnut Street.
- Clarke's Amoco, 2840 Riverside Drive.
- Lowe's Texaco, 3910 Broadway.
- Glo Oil, 1516 Second Street.
- Bill's Union 76, 2075 Rocky Creek.



PHOTO BY ED GRISAMORE

Linda Bush is the retired postmaster of Macon, Missouri, one of five cities named Macon nationwide.

- Fulwood Shell, 3198 Columbus Road.
- Anderson Service Station, 351 Pursley Street.
- Bob's Fina, 494 Monroe Street.
- Bradley Service Station, 1195 Third Street.
- Barker's Standard Oil, 2510 Pio Nono Avenue.
- Hornet Oil, 3109 Hillcrest.
- Louie Wood Service Station, 2644 Houston Avenue.

12 Roles Played By Macon-Born Actor Sam Edwards (1915-2001):

- "Little House on the Prairie" (1978-83), banker Bill Anderson.
- "Bambi" (1942), voice of adult Thumper.
- "Gunsmoke" (1955-75), Travis, Walt, Barfly, Telegrapher, Stagedriver, Morff, Cowboy, Binders.
- "Days of Our Lives" (1978-82), hotel manager, Mr. O'Keefe.
- "Happy Days" (1981), Dr. Abner.
- "Lou Grant" (1980), John Gill.
- "The Dukes of Hazard" (1979), Track Steward.
- "Wonder Woman" (1978), Ernie.
- "Barnaby Jones" (1973-80), Harry Spence, Jules, Smiley, Paul.
- "The Streets of San Francisco" (1973-76), Roger, Wino Witness, Skid Row Bum.
- "Gomer Pyle" (1968), Mr. Englehart.
- "Petticoat Junction" (1963-70), Clerk, Ned Balsam.

Eight Things You Might Not Know About Col. William M. Wadley (1813-1882), Whose Statue Is at the Intersection of Third and Mulberry Streets:

- He was the son of a New Jersey blacksmith who ended up as one of the 19th century's most revered Georgians.
- He was a 19th-century railroading pioneer and president of the Central of Georgia Railroad.
- He was a colonel during the Civil War and was superintendent of railroad service for the Confederacy. He helped rebuild Georgia's railroads that were destroyed by the invading Union armies.
- His statue is 9 feet tall, weighs 2,000 pounds and is made of bronze on a base of white, Quincy granite. It was constructed in 1886 at a cost of \$20,000.
- He is carrying his hat in his right hand. Those who knew him noted the pose bears a striking resemblance to the way he stood. In his left hand, he is clutching a long sheet of paper.
- It is said he was so strong he could bend an iron horseshoe with his bare hands.
- He lived with his family on the Great Hill Plantation in Bolingbroke.
- When he died at age 68, the Macon Telegraph and Messenger eulogized him by writing, "Every bar of iron nailed upon the breast of Georgia is a monument to his foresight and industry."



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Fakeley headlines Macon-Mercer Symphony opener

Kathryn Fakeley is as exuberant talking about life and music as she is when she’s performing on her cello, which is a lot on all counts.

The junior at the McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University, who began her musical journey with piano lessons as a toddler, is featured soloist Monday when the Macon-Mercer Symphony Orchestra opens its 2025-26 season.

Fakeley won soloist honors as co-winner of Mercer’s university-wide concerto competition. McDuffie violinist Hanami Froom was also a co-winner and was featured soloist during last season’s closing concert.

“Kathryn is a special young musician,” said violin virtuoso and McDuffie Center director Amy Schwartz Moretti. “Love for the cello and music emanates from her. And we get to hear her perform the Elgar Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85, on Monday, one of the all-time great cello works.”

Music, a family thing

Fakeley’s story is a testament to family, generational artistry and early inspiration.

“It’s funny, because my parents were both very athletic, they met in a karate class and they were not musical at all,” Fakeley said. “Everyone assumed their children would be athletic but my three sisters and I all ended up doing music.”

But Fakeley’s Oma, her grandmother, was musical indeed. Immigrating from Germany to Canada when she was 17, all she brought with her was her accordion and cello.

“I fell in love with music very young,” Fakeley said. “My parents put me in piano lessons when I was 3 and when I was 6, my Oma told them I should play cello, so I started that. I’ve been in love with the cello ever since. I have such a huge love for all things music. I love composing, orchestrating, arranging.”

Fakeley said her parents have been a great support and her Oma a great inspiration.

“She wasn’t a professional, but she played and loved music,” Fakeley said. “She would come to our house and help me practice when I was young, and she was such an encouragement. Whenever I get good news about an opportunity or competition, she’s always the first person I want to call.”

Growing as a musician — with sisters

As Fakeley grew, so did her musical talents and the opportunities to play to larger audiences with increasingly professional collaborators.

She’s won many competitions and played across Canada, the U.S., Europe and Africa. She made her solo debut at 13 and continued with the



Michael W. PANNELL

likes of Canada’s Richmond Symphony Orchestra, the Calgary Civic Symphony, the Red Deer Symphony Orchestra and many illustrious chamber music groups, including this summer at the Rome, Italy, Chamber Music Festival.

She began teaching at an early age and has always made room for playing in senior settings and recently at Macon’s Daybreak Day Resource Center.

“I think it’s so beautiful going out into the community to play for people who need it most,” she said. “You can play a million concert halls, but touching someone by going to a nursing home or hospital or school is very, very important to me. I’m in the process of trying to establish an outreach program, something I definitely want to be a major part of my career.”

But the family connection remained strong growing up and still is, especially with her younger musician sisters Sofia, Emily and Clare.

“I was always coming up with projects for my sisters,” she said. “We would make music videos. We had the most fun doing that. We saw something we wanted to make happen and we got it done. We grew up busking together, playing on street corners and whatnot. We’d go to the farmers’ market and play. Crowds loved it, and there was such a positive reaction. When I’m home, we go back, and it brings such great memories. Plus, it teaches you to play come what may.”

“I feel my family is the reason for everything, you know? If it wasn’t for my mom and dad making so many sacrifices, I wouldn’t be here today.”

And then to Macon

“Two years ago, I didn’t even know Macon existed,” Fakeley said. “Honestly, it’s very providential how it happened.”

Essentially, Fakeley’s cello teacher at the time knew of the McDuffie Center through a former McDuffie student who also taught there for a season.

“It’s kind of funny,” Fakeley said. “My dad and I looked at the website and I was thinking, ‘Full tuition scholarships? Macon, Georgia? At that level?’ We looked further and — well — my dream has always been to study with Hans Jørgen Jensen, and, my goodness, he teaches here! Ever since I was little, I’d used his instruction and technique books and thought the world of him, always dreaming of working with him. So yeah, I applied, was accepted and got a one-way ticket to Georgia. Now, it brings me to tears thinking



PHOTO BY MICHAEL W. PANNELL

Canadian-born cellist Kathryn Fakeley, a junior at the McDuffie Center for Strings at Mercer University, will be the featured soloist during Monday’s season-opening concert of the Macon-Mercer Symphony Orchestra, a hybrid orchestra comprised of students at the McDuffie Center and principal players of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. Influenced by a close-knit family and strong faith, Fakeley started playing cello at a young age, setting her sights on a career in music.

about leaving. I’ve made such incredible friends and the community feels like home, like family. I’m trying to cherish my last two years here and soak up every single moment. I’ll definitely be back. I love this place.”

A performance with the Macon-Mercer Symphony

The Elgar Cello Concerto in E minor, Op. 85, has long been a favorite of Fakeley’s. It is the piece she won the Mercer concerto contest with and what she will perform as featured soloist on Monday.

“The Elgar Concerto is a piece that made me want to learn the cello,” Fakeley said. “It was written just after World War II by Edward Elgar but didn’t become popular until Jacqueline du Pré began performing it in the 1960s. Now, it’s the most popular solo cello piece around. I loved listening to her recording of it when I was 5 or 6. I would turn it on and my sisters and I would dance around, especially to the second movement. It’s very fast and sporadic, and we’d jump from couch to couch. But the first movement really impacted me with how absolutely painful it sounded, though I couldn’t understand the emotions. Still, I was captivated by how it could make you feel a certain way. I realized, ‘Oh my goodness, music can make a person feel things.’ I started thinking early on, ‘OK, I want to learn this.’”

However, learning it could have

gotten Fakeley in trouble.

“I was about 10 and still obsessed with it,” she said. “I asked my teacher and my mom to let me learn it, and they said I was much too young and had years to go before I could start it. Then, one day we were in Calgary and my mom sent me into a little music store for something and there it was: the Elgar Concerto sheet music. I thought, ‘Oh my God, this is my chance.’ So, without my mom knowing, I secretly bought the music and would work on it whenever my parents weren’t home. I loved the concert so much but knew they’d stand by my teacher and say I was too young and not technically ready for it. So, I’d learn a few lines here and there and that’s how my journey with the concerto began, you know, as kind of a secret.”

Fakeley said it’s an honor to get to play it alongside her good friends and fellow musicians from the McDuffie Center and members of the Atlanta Symphony Orchestra. And she said her parents will be there to hear it, their first-ever visit to Macon.

Looking forward to the evening, Robert McDuffie, founder of the center and the Macon-Mercer Symphony, had this to say: “Kathryn is a joy. She’s in love with music, and her passionate playing connects with audiences in the most immediate way. She’s also been a great ambassador for the McDuffie Center and for Macon. It will be a special

night with Kathryn on stage. I’m very proud of her.”

Joseph Young will be Monday’s guest conductor.

Known for rich interpretations and an expansive conducting style, he’s led major ensembles such as the San Francisco Symphony and the National Symphony Orchestra.

As music director of the Berkeley Symphony from 2019 to 2025, he grew its audience by 40% while championing new works. He also served as artistic director of ensembles at the Peabody Conservatory. Other works to be performed on Monday are Rossini’s “Overture to La Gazza Ladra” and Stravinsky’s “Firebird Suite.”

Monday’s concert is at 7:30 p.m. at the Piedmont Grand Opera House. More information and ticket links can be found at mcduffie.mercer.edu/symphony.

Students with IDs are admitted free.

Final thoughts from Fakeley?

“I’d just love to say that I think music has such extraordinary power to touch and soften people’s hearts,” she said. “It’s such a privilege to get to do what I do and I wake up every day grateful for it. The world is so broken and hurting right now, I really believe music has the power to touch and help heal hearts.”

Contact Michael W. Pannell at mwpannell@gmail.com. Find him on Instagram: [michael_w_pannell](https://www.instagram.com/michael_w_pannell).

Be aware — it’s still mosquito season in Middle Georgia

BY KAROL KELLY Special to The Melody

Don’t relax your vigilance with mosquitoes just yet. Cooler weather may have slowed them down, but people, pets and livestock can still be exposed to West Nile virus, an infection spread by mosquitoes.

Of the 60-plus species of mosquitos in Georgia, thankfully only 10-12 are serious pests. Unfortunately, because of our warm, southern location, there are winters when they can breed throughout the year. I don’t have a silver bullet for mosquito control. However, the cheapest and easiest control is to remove sites where females lay their eggs on the surface of water. After eggs hatch, it takes the young only five to seven days to mature into adult mosquitoes.

Anywhere with standing water — not flowing — is a problem. Focus on pools of water left behind by rain (although this has not been the case lately). There are more poten-

tial “mosquito nurseries” than you might think.

Around your yard, remove or dump containers that hold water. Used tires and saucers under flower pots, for instance, are significant breeding sites. Clean out birdbaths at least once per week. Also, weekly drain or flush wading pools and other spots that collect water.

Rain gutters are often forgotten. However, be sure they are cleaned so water does not puddle. Finally, in heavy use outside areas, eliminate tall grass and weeds that are nearby to eliminate spots where adult mosquitoes may hide during the day.

There are also a number of products that can be used to keep you safe for mosquitoes. Products such as Agnique MMF form a film on the surface of the water, smothering larvae. It can be used in pet water. Mosquito dunks or briquettes containing Bti are reported as safe and effective. Altosid and Zodiac contain methoprene, an insect growth regulator.

Finally, for adults, aerosol foggers can offer temporary relief in a limited space. Surface treatments are effective if applied uniformly with good coverage. Look for chemical ingredients that end with “-thrin.”

Additionally, repellents such as candles, lamps, torches, clip-ons and Themacell are also effective in more confined areas with limited air movement. Keep in mind, this can kill many other insects besides just mosquitos. Consider using a combination of tactics to achieve acceptable control.

It is best practice to use insecticides judiciously so as to not impact a wide range of non-target organisms.

Let me end with a word of caution. Products that sound too good to be true probably are. Always follow label instructions to protect you and the environment.

Upcoming event

Gardening in Georgia: Trick or treat? That’s the theme of the Geor-



gia Annual Master Gardener Conference Oct. 17-18 at the Edgar H. Wilson Convention Center at Macon Marriott City Center. Non-members are welcome. Early

registration ends Oct. 3. Learn more at georgiamastergardeners.org.

Karol Kelly is with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension.

Kaplan back in swing after cancer fight

BY MICHAELA A. LOUGH
Melody Contributor

Former tennis star and Stratford grad Jaime Kaplan doesn't have her dark hair back.

That ship sailed for good in 2010 when she faced extramedullary acute myeloid leukemia.

But here in her 21st month since being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer — after overcoming leukemia in 2010 and then handling amyloidosis in 2020 — she's pretty much herself.

Including her silly. She's got that back.

Sitting on her porch a few months ago, before she and buddies Patty Gibbs and Jeff Battcher started on their Wimbledon 2025 Tour for a week, Kaplan was talking about the last several months.

The period included a stretch where her hands and feet were something of a mess as she battled neuropathy — a nerves-related condition that can cause weakness, numbness and pain in the hands and feet — off and on for several months.

Sitting on the table aimed at her was a camera. She is asked about different issues of the past 21 months, including her feet.

All of a sudden, a goofy grin crossed her face, and she stuck her feet in front of the camera and wiggle them.

"See my feet?" she said with a giggle. "You can edit that out, right?"

Kaplan has packed a lifetime of memories — good and bad, chilled and stressful, worried and optimistic — into the last two years. She went through it all: wondering what was wrong, worrying about how much time she had left, exhaustion and losing weight, traveling abroad, recovering and even visiting Wimbledon for the first time in 20 years.

She can dabble in spicy foods again — not pig out, but dabble.

"I asked the doctor when I was at Emory, 'The fact that I can't have spicy food, is that because it's going to hurt me or because of the aftermath?'" Kaplan said. "'The aftermath.' And I'm like, 'Well, I'm experiencing that anyway.' So I occasionally I have a teeny bit of spicy."

That's just one example of the progress and changes Kaplan has undergone since being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer in December 2023.

Kaplan has been as close to normal as normal can be, and maybe a little better, for most of about 15 months. She couldn't do dishes or take a normal shower, among other normal routine tasks, for months. She would sometimes sleep for half a day and underwent assorted digestion adjustments, had hand and feet issues, and couldn't do much of anything for most of the first several months of treatment.

Now, there's not much of anything she can't do that she wasn't doing before the diagnosis — from golf to travel to work.

Returning to normal

Kaplan retired from pro tennis in 1989 but remained active on the court for a while afterward. She went from athlete to coach, teacher, fundraiser on a variety of levels, consultant, life and guidance counselor, and adviser, booster and ambassador of tennis, Macon and sports — among other things.

But she's back in action, almost to her pre-diagnosis level. She said in December that, outside of some hitting with Stratford players on occasion, she hadn't much picked up a racquet since 2012.

Now she's regularly playing "red ball," a fairly new sport that's not far removed from pickleball — other than a bigger ball and bigger racquets. It's a little closer to tennis.

And while she can't happily dive



PHOTO BY JASON VORHEES

Former tennis star Jaime Kaplan has a new lease on life after a grueling battle with pancreatic cancer.

od, a reason cancer is rarely actually "cured" is because microscopic cancer cells can remain. They may have broken away from the primary location and are "undetected," making regular monitoring a must.

There is a difference between "remission" and "cancer-free," the latter being the very rare case where there is no detectable sign of cancer or cancer cells. You needn't monitor something that no longer exists. Thus, there is always a chance of some level of recurrence and a need for permanent monitoring and checkups, Kaplan said.

Pancreatic cancer is particularly difficult because it progresses quickly, and there's no solid method

Kaplan is happily heavier nowadays and has aged in years but not appearance — a marked change to the Kaplan of a year and a half ago.

A road to recovery

The only way to cover the last 21 months of Kaplan's life is to cover life as it happens: In order.

Around the time of the yearly Five Star Kevin Brown/Russell Henley Celebrity Classic fundraising event in September 2023, Kaplan had assorted pains, especially in her back.

Kaplan tried to get scans for her back but was denied by insurance for a variety of reasons. She had a CT scan during her yearly amyloidosis checkup, though, and that

ly successful man who accepted all those risks, made it off the table and out of the hospital only to die three weeks later from a blurst blood vessel.

A few months and a few opinions later, there came a mild adjustment in the surgical possibility: it could be operated on, but there'd be little quality of and normalcy in life as a result.

As her chemotherapy neared an end, Kaplan — with more juice and energy — accepted a distinguished alumna award from Stratford and spoke at their commencement cere-

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FOOTBALL PREVIEW

Week 6: ACE, Northeast clash; Stratford has biggest test yet

BY MICAH JOHNSTON
micah@maconmelody.com

After another turbulent slate of games for Macon teams, Week 6 should again prove to be a crucial one for several squads.

ACE and Stratford both notched critical wins last week, remaining undefeated and setting up key showdowns with powerhouse teams at home. FPD got back to its winning ways with a victory over Pinewood.

Other Macon schools stumbled. Rutland again proved it can be competitive but failed to pull off a home win against Hawkinsville. The Howard Huskies struggled on the road against Richmond Academy, falling in their second straight blowout loss.

All these results and more set up an intriguing Week 6 of high school football in Bibb County. Here's a look at the crucial contests on the docket this week.

ACE (4-0) vs.
Northeast (3-1)

Last meeting: Northeast won 46-0 in 2024. Last week: ACE defeated Wilkinson County 44-19, Northeast had week off.

Once again, the ACE Gryphons find themselves at a critical juncture. For the third time in program history, ACE is 4-0 but will face the Northeast Raiders in an attempt to get that fifth win.

The Gryphons have built a successful team from the ground up since head coach Keith Hatcher arrived in 2022.

They got what was perhaps ACE's most important win ever when they defeated area stalwart Dodge County earlier this year on the road but have not been able to get past head coach Jeremy Wiggins' dynastic Raiders squad yet.

In a stacked Region 2-A Division I — and before that in a very challenging 2A region — ACE has been the only Macon team to approach Northeast's status.

The Gryphons fell in unceremonious fashion the last two times they faced the Raiders, going down 46-0 last season, 52-26 in 2023 and 47-21 in 2022.

While there are other talented teams in the region like Dublin,



PHOTO BY MARK POWELL

ACE defender and receiver Noah Syme (blue jersey, #3) leaps over a Wilkinson County receiver to break up a pass during the Gryphons' 44-19 win over the Warriors last week. The Gryphons face powerhouse Northeast in a critical game Friday.

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PHOTO BY MARK POWELL

Northeast freshman quarterback Jordan Wiggins, son of head coach Jeremy, readies for the snap as Southwest’s defense waits during the Raiders’ game against the Patriots earlier this year. Wiggins will be key in Northeast’s crucial region showdown with ACE on Friday.

PREVIEW

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Bleckley County and the aforementioned Dodge County, the perpetual duel between ACE and Northeast feels a bit more intriguing with the all-Macon nature of the showdown.

Hatcher acknowledged the challenge of facing Northeast.

He also thinks his team will be up to the task.

“Coach (Jeremy) Wiggins and Northeast, they’ve established a great program. They’re the dominant team in Macon,” Hatcher said after his team’s win over Wilkinson County last week. “We’re excited for the opportunity. We feel like we’re in a better place than we’ve been in the last couple years. We’re gonna try to go out and compete one play at a time and see what happens.”

The Raiders, meanwhile, have become the crown jewel of Bibb County football teams in recent years. Their run to the state championship game last season captivated many Maconites.

However, Northeast did not win the region championship last year, coming in second place behind the Dublin Fighting Irish.

The Raiders are hungry for a new milestone.

With an off week to refuel, they should fire on all cylinders against the Gryphons.

ACE also had some injuries in their most recent game, chief among

them an ankle injury to starting quarterback Ace Hatcher. Keith Hatcher was unsure about the status of his son and shotcaller after the game Friday, but the Gryphons would benefit greatly from Ace’s return if they wish to compete with Northeast.

Stratford (4-0) vs. Brookstone (5-0)

Last meeting: Brookstone won 33-28 in 2024, GLAA 4A state quarter-finals. Last week: Brookstone beat Southwest Georgia 35-14, Stratford beat Frederica 28-13.

Welcome to one of the several matchups between teams who could easily meet again in a state championship game.

As per the latest MaxPreps ratings, Brookstone is No. 1 and Stratford is No. 3.

The defenses will have some pride on the line, as each team has a major offensive threat to contend with.

Brookstone quarterback Broughton Branch has completed 62.2% of his passes for 1,050 yards already. He has 15 touchdowns and only four interceptions on 90 attempts. Stratford running back Tyler Stephens, meanwhile, is en route to a 1,000-yard season with a little under 700 yards in four games.

Branch is 6-foot-2, 195 pounds and went for 287 yards against Stratford in the teams’ regular-season meeting last year, a 33-27 Brookstone win. He had 144 yards (on 11



PHOTO BY DONN RODENROTH

Stratford running back Tyler Stephens makes a cut as he attempts to evade the Frederica defense during the Eagles’ 28-13 victory over the Knights last week. Stratford remained undefeated thanks to touchdowns and interceptions from Stephens and will face another unbeaten team, Brookstone, this week.

Westside (1-3) vs. Lamar County (3-0)

Last meeting: Westside won 20-10 in 2024. Last week: Westside lost 44-22 to Bowdon, Lamar County had the week off.

The Seminoles have been through the ringer as of late, facing a trio of top-tier teams over the past three weeks.

While losses against defending state runner-up Prince Avenue Christian, recently resurgent Westover and defending state champion Bowdon are not necessarily concerning, Westside would certainly like to get back into the win column.

That said, the ‘Noles may get a chance to reset against Lamar County. The Trojans won by a large margin at home in their season opener but have since had close calls against Jackson and Rutland, a departure from the school’s typically top-tier performances.

Westside will need to find a consistent identity on offense if it wants to get going. Head coach Spoon Risper said before the season that a more balanced approach between rushing and passing would be a goal for the Seminoles this year, but so far this season the run-pass ratios have varied.

After a stellar rushing performance by running back Tylick Flint helped Westside defeat Howard to start the year, the Seminoles failed to muster much momentum on either front against Prince Avenue and

Westover. Then came last week’s showdown with Bowdon, where quarterback James Neville got a bit more comfortable passing and had 274 yards through the air for three touchdowns and two interceptions.

If they can eliminate the turnovers, that passing game developing could make a world of difference for the Seminoles.

Other games

Rivals Southwest and Central will face off Friday.

Both teams will look for a change in momentum, as Southwest has sputtered since its lone win to open the season and the Chargers remain winless.

A similar all-Macon matchup is set on the GIAA side, with Central Fellowship and Mount de Sales clashing. The Cavaliers controlled last year’s matchup with ease but are depleted this year after quarterback Zavion Deshazier transferred to Howard. The Lancers will try to pull off the higher classification upset.

FPD will attempt to keep its momentum rolling after a win over Pinewood as it takes a trip to Perry to face Westfield. The Hornets are 2-2 this season, including a one-point loss last week against Tiftarea. The all-time series between the Vikings and Hornets is almost dead even, as FPD leads 20-19 and won the most recent installment.

Tattnall and Rutland, after tough losses last week, are off this week.

NOTEPAD

Ace softball surges; Mercer cross country gets national ranking

BY MICAH JOHNSTON
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The ACE Gryphons upped their winning streak to five games Thursday with a sweep of the Jefferson County Warriors, improving to 15-5 on the season and 13-1 in region play.

The victories kept the Gryphons in first place in GHSA Region 2-A Division I, as a loss against East Laurens is ACE’s only blemish on the season thus far.

The Gryphons defeated the Warriors 12-0 and 15-0 in two games this week, notching 11 hits in the first leg of the double header and 12 hits in Game 2.

ACE’s other wins in its recent streak, which dates back to Sept. 11, came against Central and Washington County.

The Gryphons would have a 10-game unbeaten streak if not for a close 9-8 loss on the road against Mary Persons.

East Laurens is the clear competition for ACE at the moment. The Falcons only trail the Gryphons by a slim

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PHOTO BY MARK POWELL

ACE running back Bryson Vincent (1) battles the Wilkinson County defense on a rushing attempt during the Gryphons’ 44-19 win last week. ACE remained unbeaten with the win thanks to Vincent’s five touchdowns.

ACE gets 44-19 Homecoming win behind Vincent’s five TDs

BY MICAH JOHNSTON
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Thanks to an incredible second-half performance from running back Bryson Vincent, the ACE Gryphons got another key win on Homecoming

and defeated the Wilkinson County Warriors 44-19 in Macon Friday night.

Vincent finished with 177 total yards — a whopping 150 of which came in the second half — and five

touchdowns for ACE, tearing up the Wilkinson County offensive line with chunk plays to help the Gryphons take firm control of what had been a close game through two quarters.

“He’s a great player, and each week he’s gotten stronger as the game has gone on. I think that’s a testament to our offensive line, how much we’ve improved there,” ACE head coach Keith Hatcher said. “We’ve got a really good group up front, and they’ve

done a really good job of establishing the run and taking over, particularly in the second half.”

ACE led 23-13 at the break and stuffed the Warriors to start the second half. Just two plays into their first drive of the third quarter, though, the Gryphons ran into a problem when quarterback Ace Hatcher went down

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After crucial win, Mercer to visit The Citadel

BY MICAH JOHNSTON
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If you looked at the stat sheet for Mercer’s game against Wofford last week, you might think they cruised to a blowout win.

The Bears beat the Terriers in just about every category — Mercer had almost four times as many first downs, 27-7, and ran 36 more plays from scrimmage than Wofford. The Bears also outgained Wofford 463 to 293 and had the ball 65% of the time (38:54 to 21:06) while reaching the red zone six more times than the Terriers.

Regardless of the numbers on paper, the numbers on the scoreboard told a different story.

Mercer defeated Wofford 22-21 in a thriller at home last week for their first win of the season, as a touch-

down right at the start of the fourth quarter gave them a lead they would not relinquish.

“Certainly really pleased with the outcome from Saturday. A lot of the things we talked about that we needed to do to win, we accomplished in practice,” head coach Mike Jacobs said Monday. “Throughout the course of the game, if you just look at the statline — pretty dominant on both sides of the ball and in all three phases.”

The Bears are now 1-1 and have a Southern Conference win early in the year.

The biggest story from the victory was likely freshman quarterback Braden Atkinson, who stepped up in his first career game and threw for 316 yards, a touchdown and two interceptions on 26-of-37 passing.

“Obviously we made a change at

quarterback... I thought he played extremely well, with the exception of a couple of those picks,” Jacobs said of Atkinson. “He connected I think on his first nine passes, he had eight passes over 15 yards.

“That opens things up in the run game. Our offensive line, who I’ve been challenging quite a bit, did a great job in the run game. We kept things clean.”

It was a well-rounded performance against a Wofford defense that had an impressive track record coming in — the Terriers had, despite not scoring any offensive touchdowns in two games, kept both of their contests close against solid teams thanks to good defense.

Wofford kept the game tight

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PHOTO BY JASON VORHEES

Mercer head football coach Mike Jacobs gestures as he speaks to the media during the Bears’ press conference Monday afternoon. After a zany 22-21 win over Wofford, Mercer will face its first road test this week against The Citadel.

KAPLAN

Continued from Page B1

mony a few days later on May 18, 2024.

Few knew that the speech came a day after a round of chemo. She was ready to surrender her speech to her brother, Mike, but felt good enough to battle through the four-minute speech and did so with relative ease.

A visit that month to Vanderbilt opened the door to alternative surgical options as well as an adjustment in treatment. Another surgery was discussed and dismissed, and there was one test that showed the cancer had spread and yet another that said it hadn’t.

At the end of that month, her chemotherapy was over and considered a success. She made her first trip to a hair salon in many months.

Her cancer number remained monitored. It had been a scary 3,700 — 0-35 is normal — but was slowly dropping.

Kaplan went from the yearly June doctor visit in Boston regarding her amyloidosis treatment — she got that in 2020 — to a first meeting with doctors at Memorial Sloan Kettering in New York City to discuss MRI-guided, high-dosage radiation treatment. She returned a week later for an MRI-like “mapping” of her organs and the tumor.

There were five MRI-like treatments over the course of eight days. A body cuff, similar to ones used for blood pressure, was strapped around Kaplan’s midsection and inflated.

“And then when I thought they couldn’t inflate it anymore, they would inflate it some more,” she said.

Each such session lasted just short of two hours, and Kaplan had to remain completely still.

“[I] don’t feel a thing, but I’m about ready to crawl out of my skin,” she recalled. “That cuff being on me for so long and being still was pretty rough. By the end, the last probably 15 to 30 minutes, I could feel tears running down the sides of my eyes. It was tough.”

The stress of everything plus the difficult treatment put her down for a few days — although the impact

wasn’t as exhausting as chemo.

Having a day between sessions allowed for some recovery and a little visiting of NYC. Of course, it came during a tennis major, which cut down on tourism.

“Getting ready to watch Wimbledon,” she posted on Facebook on July 14, 2024, in between sessions at Sloan Kettering.

Also watching was her friend — and well-known Macon sports figure and philanthropist — Jeff Battcher, who had started talking to Kaplan about going to Wimbledon for the first time.

Battcher asked Kaplan to go with him to Wimbledon’s 2025 iteration. She agreed, and it was filed away in the growing folder of wishful thinking.

“So every text message that we’ve texted in the last year has ended with ‘W 25!’” Kaplan said of Battcher’s encouragement campaign.

The next year and Wimbledon were nowhere on Kaplan’s radar as she waited out another round of treatment and its uncertainty.

So began a routine of scans locally or at Emory, six-month visits back to Sloan Kettering and a collection of assorted medication with accompanying side effects.

A few weeks after the sessions at Sloan Kettering in July 2024, she attended the U.S. Tennis Association’s Southern Summer Meeting in New Orleans. Scans a few weeks after that showed a slight shrinkage in her cancer.

She was pretty much back on schedule working for the Southern Tennis Foundation as well as again helping organize the latest Five Star Celebrity Classic, which last year raised \$1.23 million.

That was a huge eight-day period for Kaplan.

As part of the Classic’s Monday-Tuesday schedule, she became the first woman added to Idle Hour Country Club’s Wall of Fame, joining the likes of Alfred Sams, Russell Henley and Peter Persons, among others.

That weekend was “Jaime’s Love Weekend,” a collection of events at John Drew Smith Tennis Center and Idle Hour intended to raise money

for tennis scholarships in her name with the Southern Tennis Foundation.

About \$4,000 remains to reach the goal of \$200,000, a much larger number than originally planned.

Officials from assorted tennis organizations as well as several former Kaplan players attended the weekend’s events.

After a few weeks to regroup came 11 days in Europe. Ever so slowly Kaplan gained weight and cracked a whole 120 pounds for the first time in a year.

The tennis freak hadn’t picked up a tennis racquet since about 2012. She soon changed that — to initially mixed results.

“I hit a couple of times with kids at Stratford,” she said. “I tried to hit with a couple of my boys. I think it was Samuel Barrow and Daniel Colin. I tried to hit with them, and it felt so foreign. It felt like I had never played tennis before.”

All of a sudden, there was Kaplan, on a court and swinging. Granted, it wasn’t tennis — it was red ball, the child of tennis and pickleball, so to speak, with the same court as pickleball but using tennis-like racquets and a bigger ball.

She attended an introductory red ball session at Rhythm and Rally in the Macon Mall in November 2024, an event with plenty of familiar tennis faces.

Before she knew it, she was on the court — with a racquet that felt familiar — and moving around.

“It’s just like playing tennis to me,” she said. “That was a happy day. Oh, it was awesome.”

The Kaplan of that evening was a familiar Kaplan — certainly not the same one of about seven months earlier, the worn down and worried iteration.

Then came December and the year anniversary of the diagnosis. It was quite the anniversary — that was when she was first told she was in remission.

It made for an even nicer trip to New York City for the six-month checkup at Sloan Kettering.

By the time Christmas rolled around, Kaplan was more or less back to normal.

Across the pond

The change from July 2024 to July 2025 in Kaplan’s life and prognosis is staggering.

On July 14, 2024, Kaplan wanted simply to be in decent enough shape to watch Wimbledon from a room in New York City, completely unsure what the future held.

On July 5, 2025, Battcher, Kaplan and Gibbs hopped on a flight to London with a full schedule.

They saw “Phantom of the Opera” and “Les Miserables.” They ran into current Stratford player Lauren Little and former player Hadley Cullars.

They toured the House of Commons and Westminster Abbey.

There were visits to pubs while bouncing around on buses.

And there was tennis at Wimbledon, some of which came in Martina Navratilova’s on-court box and on Centre Court in between visits with Gigi Fernandez, Pam Shriver, Kathy Rinaldi and Virginia Ruzici, among others.

One Kaplan mainstay picture shows her standing in front of the Wimbledon logo and a green facade back in 1985. In July, 40 years later, she took a picture in the same spot.

“It was like I was there for the first time,” said Kaplan, who last visited Wimbledon in 2005. “So many memories, a flashback, but certainly the most memories were 1985, the first time I played.”

The grounds of 2025 bore little resemblance to those of even 2005. Kaplan put Battcher and Gibbs in charge of getting the map of the complex and leading them to where they were supposed to go.

Kaplan was sitting in a fog of quasi-misery and hope in New York one year and sitting in Centre Court the next. What a life.

In August, she celebrated her other “birthday” — it had been 15 years since she got a bone marrow transplant to fix her leukemia. Earlier this week, she helped put on another Five Star Celebrity Classic.

The tentativeness of describing her situation as “in remission” is still there.

“In retrospect, I probably shouldn’t have put that word out there because

I think a lot of people equate that with ‘cure,’” she said. “I still need prayers. Like I said, this stuff comes back 95% of the time, and it comes back with a vengeance.

“So, that’s why I said in my post that the little boogers are traveling around trying to reorganize. The tumor is still there. It sunk a little bit. It will never go away.”

Kaplan said it’s almost safe to say that the tumor itself is dead, but it was never alone.

“If it came back, that’s not where it would come from,” she said. “It would come from the fact that it’s in my blood, traveling around.”

Nevertheless, it no longer prevents Kaplan from traveling around or getting back to normal. In fact, she returned almost 100% of the time to coaching Stratford tennis last spring.

In the first season after the diagnosis, Kaplan only attended most home matches, wore a mask and moved slowly.

A year later, in 2025, she was back to normal, with a co-head coach matchup.

“He does a lot of the things that I used to do,” she said of co-coach Sandy Burgess. “We talk. But Sandy’s brilliant about that stuff.

“When we get in the huddle, Sandy talks first to the team. He’s a great tennis coach.”

This year’s Five Star Classic marked two years since the initial back pain emerged and led to her diagnosis. The Classic of 2025 felt a lot like the Classic of 2022: normal.

“Last year I didn’t expect to feel as good as I did,” she said. “And then, this year, I didn’t expect to be here. This is a bonus year.”

Kaplan’s faith has allowed her to bypass concerns of mortality, of being on life’s clock, of whether there’s a recurrence. She’s just rocking and rolling.

“I’ve always just trusted God — from the second I got that phone call to come back down to Georgia Cancer,” Kaplan said. “It’s hard to describe. It’s this same thing I did when I had leukemia. I know this is different, but you know, I want to live like I’m living and not live like I’m dying. I do my thing.”

NOTEPAD

Continued from Page B2

margin with an 11-1 region mark and have already beaten them once. The two teams meet Sept. 25 in a game that could determine the region champ.

This week, ACE played Lamar County before The Melody went to print.

The Gryphons have the weekend off before games against Peach County, Northeast and East Laurens next week.

Central gets win over crosstown rival

The Central Chargers are the next-highest ranked Macon team in Region 2-A Division I with an 8-8 overall mark and a 5-6 region record.

The Chargers have found success with their pitching in games they have won, including shutouts of Westside and Southwest early in the season, though Central has strug-

gled to contain the offenses of the stronger teams in its region.

It was the Chargers’ own offense that came to life in a recent crosstown matchup with non-region opponent Howard, however. Central defeated the Huskies 11-6 after going down 5-0 early.

The comeback was fueled by a two-hit performance from Alana Neal and a four-run team effort in the fifth inning. Howard scored once more in the sixth to make it a 7-6 game, but Central scored four more in the bottom of the frame to pull away for good.

Tattnall and FPD duel with John Milledge in GIAA 4A

The Tattnall Trojans took a rare loss on the softball diamond last week, falling 6-1 against the John Milledge Trojans on the road Tuesday evening to fall to 11-4 overall and 4-1 in region play.

The loss snapped a six-game winning streak for Tattnall and put them in second place in GIAA Class 4A

District 6, with John Milledge taking the tiebreaker over Tattnall with the win.

Tattnall is still in a good spot. Victories over FPD, Piedmont and Stratford — the last of which was a thrilling 7-6 win against the Eagles that ended with a walk-off single from Carsyn Atwater — have them in position for a solid region finish and playoff seed.

FPD is right behind Tattnall in third place with an 11-3 overall record and 3-2 region mark.

The Vikings defeated Stratford with an offensive explosion for a 13-0 rivalry win. Gracyn Fuller had three hits and four RBIs in the key victory.

The Vikings and Trojans meet in a crucial rematch Tuesday after Tattnall took the first game between the Macon rivals 1-0 earlier this month.

Mercer women’s cross country ranked

The women’s cross country team at Mercer earned a national ranking

this week for the first time in program history, coming in at No. 12 in official nationwide NCAA Division I rankings issued by the U.S. Track and Field and Cross Country Coaches Association.

An impressive performance over the weekend in which eight different Mercer players had personal best times at the Southern Showcase in Alabama.

The Bears finished eighth overall as a team.

Nikki Harris, a graduate student, netted the third-best 5K time in Mercer’s program history with a 17:14.4, good for 20th place at the event. Freshman Mary Grace Parker finished with a personal-best 17:28.6 for the fifth-best time in Mercer history.

The Bears’ No. 12 ranking puts them in a top echelon along with two other Georgia schools, Georgia Tech at No. 8 and Kennesaw State at No. 9. Alabama, Florida and Lipscomb are the top three schools on the list.

MGA men’s soccer earns two wins ahead of PBC opener

The Middle Georgia State men’s soccer team defeated Warner University on the road Saturday with a barrage of goals in a 4-1 game.

The second win of the season for the Knights came thanks to a lopsided shooting difference, as Middle Georgia State notched 27 shots while Warner had just seven. The goals — the Knights scored twice in each half — came from Jatniel Ardila, Samuel Hoyos, Moos Zwerts and Carlos Hernandez Buchanan.

The Knights improved to 2-0-1 with the victory. The draw was a 0-0 contest against Eckerd on Sept. 11, while the win came in Middle Georgia State’s season opener at home against Brewton-Parker this month.

The Knights have now outscored their opponents 10-1 through three games. Middle Georgia State played its first-ever Peach Belt game against Georgia Southwestern State on Wednesday, after The Melody went to print.



PHOTO BY DONN RODENROTH

The Stratford defense wraps up a Frederica ballcarrier during the Eagles’ 28-13 victory against the Knights at home last week. Stratford used a strong second half to pull away late for the win.

ACE

Continued from Page B2

with an ankle injury.

In swooped Vincent, who effortlessly carried the ball the next six straight plays for 42 yards and an ACE touchdown to give his team a much more commanding 30-13 lead. All backup passer Brady Balkcom had to do was handle the snap and give his tailback the ball.

Wilkinson County got things going on its next drive — the Warriors were quick on offense all evening, as quarterback Quenterrion Stanford connecting regularly with shifty receivers Myles Cobb and Terrelle Blount — to make it 30-19 with a touchdown pass from Stanford to Cobb.

Vincent and the ACE offense did not bat an eye. The Gryphons answered with a 10-play, 60-yard scoring drive that chewed up what was left of the third quarter. Vincent ran the ball on nine of those 10 plays, accruing 45 yards and the touchdown.

It was a much-needed, singular performance, considering the focal point of ACE’s offense was sidelined for the entire second half along with some other important players.

“We lost four or five key guys tonight. Hopefully they’re all gonna be okay, we really don’t know yet. To have a guy like Bryson and our offensive line be able to control the second half, that was the key to our success tonight,” Keith Hatcher said.

The Gryphons moved to 4-0 for

the third time in program history after beginning the season that way in 2021 and 2022, albeit with arguably easier schedules on those occasions. The Homecoming win came after a program-defining victory on the road against traditional powerhouse Dodge County last week.

“Always great to win on Homecoming in front of a big crowd. More than anything we’re just focused on one game at a time,” Hatcher said. “To be here at 4-0 — we’ll get started with the next game on Monday, but right now we’re gonna enjoy this. This is a great spot for us to be in as a program.”

The Gryphons’ fifth game looms large, as ACE must now take on the defending state-runners up in Northeast. The Raiders will be the visitors at Perkins Field in a high-stakes Region 2-A Division I showdown.

“Coach (Jeremy) Wiggins and Northeast, they’ve established a great program. They’re the dominant team in Macon,” Hatcher said. “We’re excited for the opportunity. We feel like we’re in a better place than we’ve been in the last couple years. We’re gonna try to go out and compete one play at a time and see what happens.”

While Vincent may not have such a dominant performance, the ACE offense still looks well-equipped to take on Northeast’s elite defense. The Gryphons scored touchdowns on six of their eight drives, not including the sequence ended by halftime.

Both offenses had strong starts, as ACE manufactured a 49-yard drive

capped by an Ace Hatcher rushing touchdown before Wilkinson County answered with an 80-yard sequence polished off by a 29-yard touchdown run by Stanford.

ACE’s next drive stalled out, though it looked like the Gryphons might get the ball back when they pinned the Warriors at their own 13-yard line. Wilkinson instead embarked on a stellar 87-yard drive, however, eating up the rest of the first quarter and part of the second before scoring on an 8-yard throw from Stanford to Cobb.

After three touchdowns, PATs and two-point tries made a difference, as Wilkinson had a 13-8 lead.

ACE did not let another opportunity go by the wayside, scoring on its next drive with a Bryson Vincent rushing touchdown and two-point conversion to make it 16-13.

The Gryphons then held Wilkinson County for the rest of the opening half, taking advantage of subsequent short field as a result of the Warriors’ weak kicking game. Another rushing score from Vincent gave ACE a 23-13 lead that held into halftime.

Then the second half arrived and Vincent took over. While the Warriors got one more touchdown, ACE’s final score to make it 44-19 took the wind out of Wilkinson County’s sails.

Its final two drives ended in interceptions — one by Jack Perry, who had a great game overall, the other by Quince Thompson — to put the finishing touches on the Gryphons’ Homecoming victory.

Stratford wins 28-13 over Frederica with second-half surge

BY MICHAEL A. LOUGH
Melody Contributor

Stratford running back and linebacker Tyler Stephens was pretty amped.

“It was my first interception of the year,” the senior said after taking pictures with a happy family. “It felt good.”

That was after the game. When his key pick first happened, Stephens needed a break.

“I feel like I could’ve taken it to the house,” he said. “But hey, we got the win, so that’s all that matters.”

Stephens sat for the first three plays after the pick, then went back on offense and promptly scored to all but seal Stratford’s 28-13 win Friday night over Frederica in GIAA non-region action.

The Eagles improved to 4-0 for the second straight year while the Knights fell to 2-3.

Stratford’s modus operandi this year has been for a suspenseful first half that leads to a riled-up head coach Paul Carroll at halftime, followed by a pretty solid second half.

“I think our coaches do a good job of making some adjustments at half,” Carroll said. “Our kids, they realize they’re not playing good and they realized they got to come out and get things accomplished.”

Frederica quarterback Stanton Beverly and running backs Jayden Gibson and Travis Garland gave Stratford some trouble early on,

and the Knights defense kept the Eagles contained.

Stratford scored on its second possession after a three-and-out with a nice 72-yard drive, highlighted by a perfect 36-yard pass from Tucker Johnston to George Dunn on third and 11.

Three plays later, from the I formation, Stephens went in from 9 yards out.

Frederica answered with a nine-play, 80-yard drive. The only third down faced was a third-down conversion, and it ended with a touchdown when Jaylen Baldwin went around the right side on a jet sweep from 11 yards out less than two minutes into the second quarter.

The slugfest continued until the hosts took the lead on a five-play, 79-yard drive.

Gibson went for 45 yards, going left and to the middle and then right before the officials tacked on another 15 yards for a late hit. J.C. Wesel caught the 12-yard pass out of a power formation, and Frederica took a 13-6 lead with 29 seconds left in the half.

Down 13-6 at the break, the Eagles had ‘em where they wanted ‘em. Not.

Did Carroll get a little red-faced?

“He is always red-faced at halftime,” Stephens said. “It doesn’t matter if we’re up 20, he’s red-faced, he’s mad. He wants to be up 50.”

See STRATFORD
Page B5

MERCER

Continued from Page B3

against Mercer as well, even if it wasn’t using dominant defense.

“Things we have to do better, obviously ball security. Any time you turn the ball over four times it’s a massive issue,” Jacobs said. “With the stats skewed the way they were, is why the score was closer than the stats may have indicated. We’ll work a ton on our ball security — not that we haven’t been but we’ll re-emphasize all those things.”

The Terriers also got key stops exactly when they needed them, despite allowing Mercer to gain 463 yards of total offense.

“Our red-zone stuff, especially inside the 5-yard line. That’s a demeanor, so I take that stuff personally as an offensive line guy. When we’re on the one-inch line, we need touchdowns,” Jacobs said. “That’s how you put teams away. That’s how great teams play, and we have to have that advantage. It’s a demeanor, it’s a toughness.”

While the Bears did not lean on a specific running back as they did last year with standout Dwayne McGee, backs CJ Miller and Micah Bell combined for a solid 131 rushing yards. Miller scored once on the ground and also got involved through the air for 22 yards and another touchdown.

Mercer’s defense also stepped up, holding Wofford throughout the fourth quarter after faltering a bit early in the beginning of the second half.

Jacobs was pleased with the effort for the whole game but also referenced specific plays, like one early in the game where Tommy Bliss ran down a Terriers ball carrier and forced a fumble to prevent a touchdown.

The head coach also praised

Andrew Zoch, Drew Clare and Kaleb Hutchinson for key stops on fourth downs.

“You never know when your effort and your execution is gonna be the game-breaker,” Jacobs said. “I’m really proud of our kids because they fought and played hard. They did a lot of the things we asked. They didn’t listen to the outside voice and they just worked on the things that they could execute.”

With more confidence and a better sense of its identity, Mercer will hit the road for the first time this season when it faces The Citadel in South Carolina on Saturday for an afternoon Southern Conference showdown.

Jacobs was complimentary of The Citadel and head coach Maurice Drayton.

“I know they’re gonna be well-coached and play really hard. His background is in special teams, I think they’re an elite special teams team,” he said. “You see them with a game-breaking play almost weekly in some facet of the specials.

“They present some challenges with what they do offensively. We’re anticipating a really good team. We’re at the point where, with a bunch of young guys, we’re probably gonna be in dogfights every week.”

The Bulldogs are 1-2 coming into the contest after a 23-12 loss against Gardner-Webb last week.

Their other loss was an expected 38-0 drubbing at the hands of FCS juggernaut North Dakota State, while the victory was a ringing 40-13 road win over Samford.

The Citadel relies on a solid rushing attack, as four different Bulldogs have more than 60 yards on the ground this season. Quarterback Cobey Thompkins leads the way with 141 yards rushing so far to pair with 260 passing yards.

The Macon Melody WEEKLY Classifieds

Employment

Critical Care Physician (Multi Openings). Health Services of Central Georgia, Inc. DBA Atrium Health Navicent Medical Group. Macon, GA. Diagnose, treat & supp crit ill & injured patients. Supv NPs/PAs. Reqs M.D. from accred U.S. med school or foreign equiv or ECFMG. Reqs 5 yrs of training (3-yr int med rsdncy & 2-yr crit care fellowship). Must have active GA med lic; must have passed all parts of USMLE. Must be board eligible in int med. Apply: Send resume to: jenny.willis@advocatehealth.org & ref #118803.

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The Georgia Trust for Local News is looking for an experienced journalist to join our news staff as a general assignment reporter covering Bleckley and Twiggs counties.

The ideal candidate will have a passion for accurate and timely local journalism that serves Middle Georgia. The reporter will need to work collaboratively with news and advertising staff while also owning their beat, balancing long-term projects with daily reporting.

Experience with InDesign, utilizing a CMS, shooting photos and recording video is preferred, but not required.

GTLN offers employee benefits including insurance options, paid vacation, holidays and mileage reimbursement. More detail will be provided to applicants meeting minimum qualifications. Salary commensurate with experience.

This is not a remote position. Our office is based in Dublin, Georgia. Reporters are required to have a valid Georgia driver’s license, reliable transportation and vehicle insurance.

Applicants send a resume, cover letter and clips to kyle@courierheraldtoday.com.

Job Type: Full-time

Benefits:

- Health insurance
- Dental insurance
- Life Insurance
- Paid time off

Schedule:

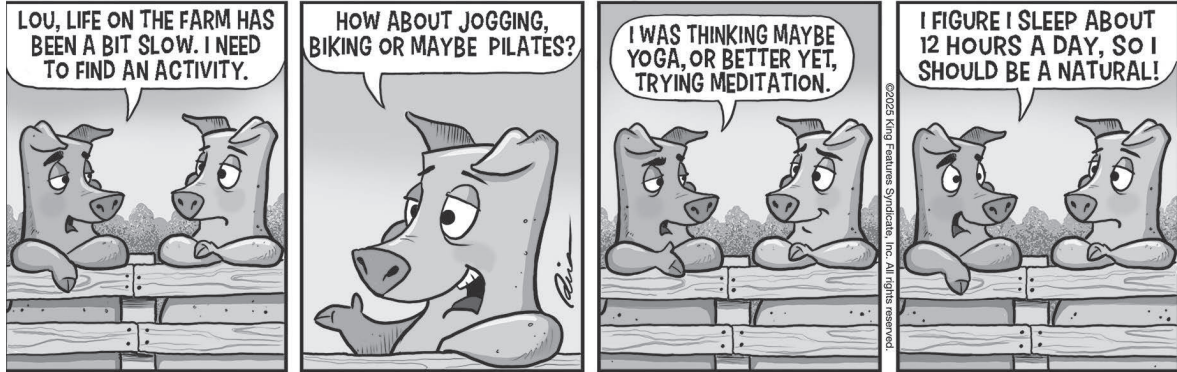
- 8 hour shift
- Evenings as needed
- Weekends as needed

The GTLN, which also operates 18 newspapers across Middle and South Georgia, is a subsidiary of the National Trust for Local News, a nonprofit committed to conserving, transforming and sustaining vibrant community news enterprises across the country. The Macon project is made possible by a \$5 million grant from the John S. and James L. Knight Foundation.

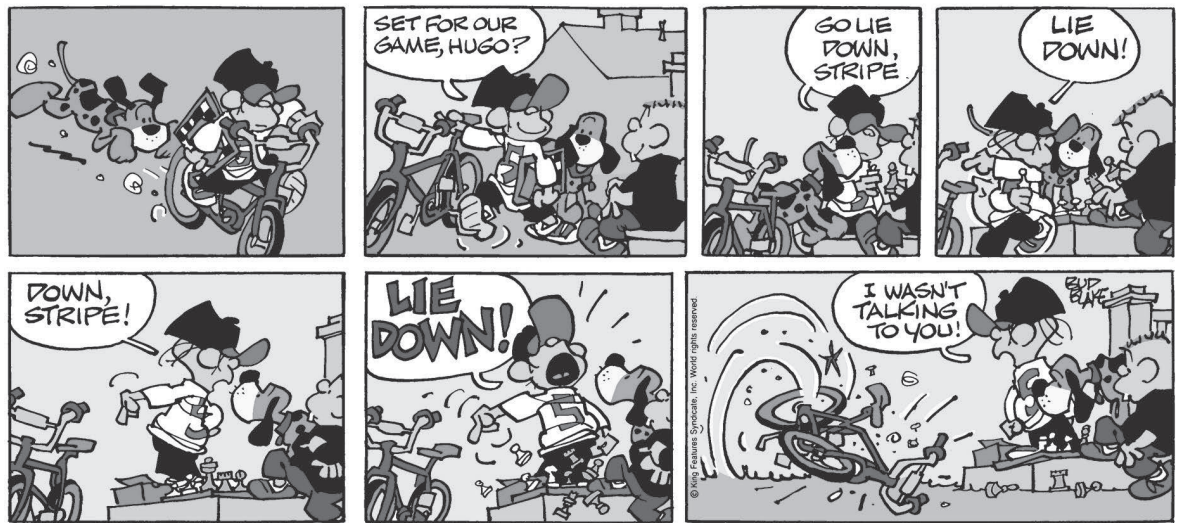
COMICS & GAMES

The Macon Melody • MaconMelody.com • Friday, September 19, 2025 • B5

Amber Waves



TIGER



The Spats



Weekly SUDOKU

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 9-box square contains all of the numbers from one to nine.

DIFFICULTY THIS WEEK: ♦♦♦

♦ Moderate ♦♦ Challenging
♦♦♦ HOO BOY!

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HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Paper is longer. 2. Mirror is longer. 3. Man's left arm is not showing. 4. Light is different. 5. Hood is different. 6. Pants are different.

King Crossword

ACROSS

- Like lemons
- Rock concert booster
- Farm fathers
- "The Kite Runner" boy
- Saloon
- Buffalo's lake
- Yellow-brown gemstone
- Blaze
- Industrious insect
- Actor Karl
- Entices
- Small rodents
- Common connections
- Vision tests
- Enjoy Aspen
- Camper owners, for short
- Yule quaff
- Close watch
- Blog entry
- Hibernia
- Trousers
- Brief time
- Debussy's "La —"
- Author Hunter
- Good-looking person
- Laptop connection
- Fair-hiring letters
- Shabby beer joint

1	2	3	4		5	6	7		8	9	10	11
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			36					37				
38	39	40					41					
42					43	44				45	46	47
48					49				50			
51					52				53			

DOWN

- Bit of ink
- "— Blue?"
- Fix illegally
- Goodies
- Help a hood
- Spring month
- Opening night
- Automatic reaction
- Saharan
- Swampy terrain
- Viewed
- ER workers
- Experts
- Pyramid part
- "Puppy Love" singer
- Beatnik's assent
- "No way!"
- Katniss in "The Hunger Games"
- Shortly
- Lion's share
- Boot camp
- VIPs
- Check
- Mr. Brezhnev
- Saint Patrick's Day event
- Chest muscle
- Stitches
- Marisa's "Only Love" role
- Parisian eatery
- Cat call
- Pro vote
- Veto
- 506, in old Rome
- However

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- MOVIES: What was the name of Ron Burgundy's dog in "Anchorman"?
- LITERATURE: The middle school student Greg Heffley is the protagonist of which book series?
- SCIENCE: What is the Abyssal Zone in the ocean?
- GEOGRAPHY: Where is the island of Aruba located?
- TELEVISION: Which city is the setting for the series "Breaking Bad"?
- PSYCHOLOGY: What is the fear of colors called?
- ANATOMY: What connects muscles to bones?
- U.S. STATES: Which state is home to the Badlands National Park?
- U.S. PRESIDENTS: Who was the sixth president of the United States?
- GENERAL KNOWLEDGE: What is September's traditional birthstone?

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STRANGE BUT TRUE

BY LUCIE WINBORNE
King Features Syndicate

- The U.S. postmaster general was in the line of succession to the presidency until 1971.
- There are more mobile phones than people alive.
- In the late 18th century, Sweden's King Gustav III tried to prove that coffee was a deadly substance by making one twin drink coffee and the second one tea on a daily basis, while betting on which would be the first to succumb. Both twins survived and outlived both the king and the doctors conducting the experiment.
- The longest English word that

- generally appears in dictionaries is "pneumonoultramicroscopicsilicovolcanoconiosis," the name of a lung disease.
- Watermelons were often used as canteens by early explorers and travelers.
- The tobacco industry spends almost \$4 billion per year to promote smoking, more than is spent advertising and promoting any other product.
- Black holes aren't black. They glow slightly, giving off light across the whole spectrum.
- The world's largest playable guitar is 43.5 feet long.
- Before an NHL game, hockey pucks are frozen to make them glide

- smoothly and reduce bouncing.
- The ancient Greeks believed that amethysts could ward off intoxication and hangovers, so they often drank wine from cups carved from the gemstone.
- Seven percent of Americans steal toilet paper rolls in hotels or motels.
- About 70-75% of the world's population does not use toilet paper.
- In 2009 a pigeon named Winston raced Telkom, South Africa's largest ISP, to see which one could deliver 4GB of data to a location 60 miles away the fastest. By the time Winston arrived with the 4GB flash drive, Telkom had transmitted only 4% of the data.

NOW HERE'S A TIP

BY JOANN DERSON
King Features Syndicate

- If you get a gray-colored film on your utensils after they come out of the dishwasher, try cleaning them with a cream of tartar paste. Additionally, clean out the filter regularly.
- "I love my blender and use it all the time, but I don't always have time to clean the blades properly when I'm in a rush. There is a spot under the blades that I find it hard to clean if my smoothie gets dried on. I have found a way to clean it now, though, with rice! A couple of spoonfuls in the otherwise clean blender, and the rice buffs any residue right off. I even

- use the rice powder in a home-made facial mask that makes my skin feel great!"
- Have you nailed down your holiday shopping list yet? Many find it distasteful to see Christmas and other holiday items out so early, but studies show that the earlier you start, the less you spend, likely because you are not rushed and can shop sales.
- Use cola to marinate your meat! The acids in the soda pop make meat nice and tender before cooking, and sugar can give you a nice caramel flavor on the outside. Use a cola bath for meat on the grill or search cookbooks or internet sites for slow-cooker recipes.

STRATFORD

Continued from Page B4

The Eagles have trailed twice in four games at halftime and outscored opponents by only six points. The halftime chats work. Stratford has outscored its foes 100-18 in the second half.

"Let them know exactly what they're doing wrong," Carroll said. "We got to play a lot harder than we played in the first half, and I think we did."

It took a little while, though the

Eagles moved on their first drive only for a misplayed snap to sabotage a 36-yard field goal try on the first trip of the third quarter.

Stratford forced a punt and got it back on its own 13-yard line. On the fifth snap, in the I, Stephens went up the middle and was gone quickly for a 54-yard touchdown. He ran in the conversion for a 14-13 lead with 4:12 left in the third.

Frederica countered with a sweep after a touchback, getting a 24-yard pass to Baldwin on third and 4 to get on Stratford's side of the field. The

Knights were pushed back to the Eagles' 20 on a touchdown-nullifying hold, however.

Beverly rolled right and threw a strike, but the pass went right to Stephens. The speedster picked it off inside the 5 and took it back to the 42.

Carroll decided over the summer that Stephens would play defense. "He's got a knack," Carroll said. "He's got a football IQ. He can play man coverage, he can play cover 3 and he breaks on the football."

He needed some air after the in-

terception. Jalon Smith and Aaron Jefferson picked up 20 yards on three tries, then back came Stephens for a 34-yard touchdown. Smith, an offensive lineman, bullied in the conversion for a 22-13 lead with 8:52 left in the game.

A sack by Maddox Whitehead for a loss of 10 doomed a Frederica possession, and Stratford sealed it with a nine-play drive, Stephens going in from the 5 with 2:38 left.

He finished with 219 yards on 28 carries, while Frederica quarterback Beverly passed for 201 yards.

Stratford held Frederica to 153 yards on 26 carries, with 70 coming on two carries.

Carroll is working on patience with the first-half issues, and expects improvement, which will be needed with Brookstone's visit next week.

"In high school, it's hard sometimes to really just come out fast all the time," he said. "It's hard for you to match the speed of the game right away."

"The biggest improvement tonight was we lined up and got a little toughness about us."

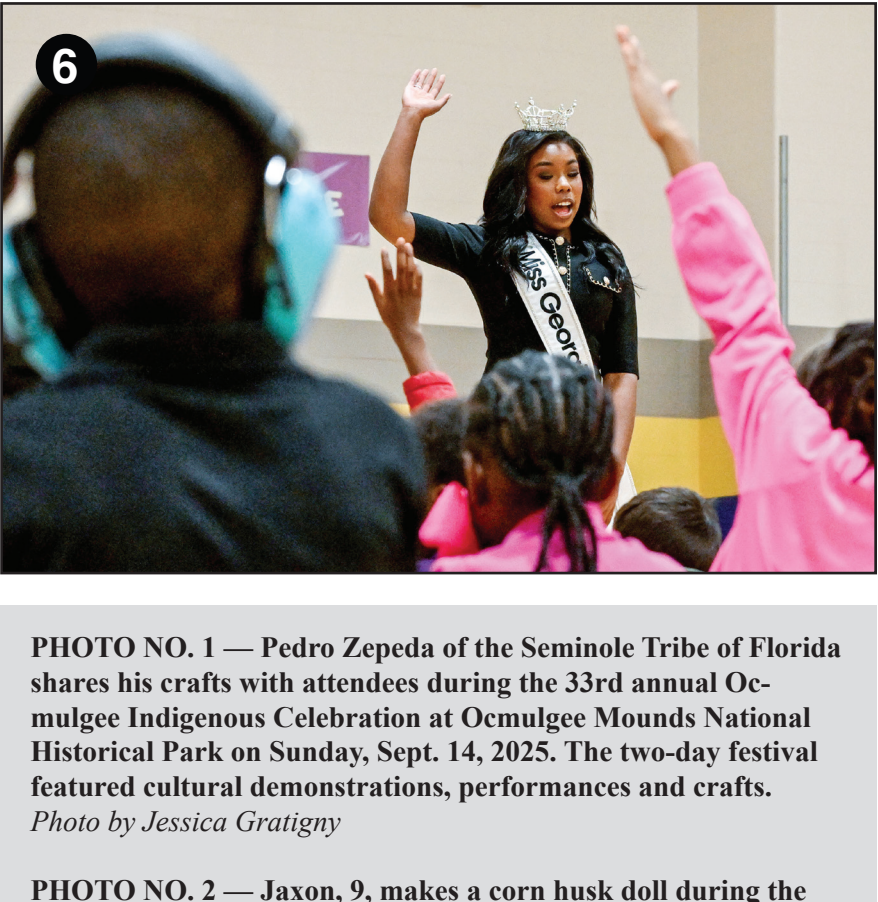


PHOTO NO. 1 — Pedro Zepeda of the Seminole Tribe of Florida shares his crafts with attendees during the 33rd annual Ocmulgee Indigenous Celebration at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park on Sunday, Sept. 14, 2025. The two-day festival featured cultural demonstrations, performances and crafts. *Photo by Jessica Gratigny*

PHOTO NO. 2 — Jaxon, 9, makes a corn husk doll during the 33rd annual Ocmulgee Indigenous Celebration at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park on Sunday, Sept. 14, 2025. The Make & Take program invited children to learn traditional crafts from Native artists, including corn husk dolls with Yafke Marks. *Photo by Jessica Gratigny*

PHOTO NO. 3 — Festival attendees play stickball during the 33rd annual Ocmulgee Indigenous Celebration at Ocmulgee Mounds National Historical Park on Sunday, Sept. 14, 2025. *Photo by Jessica Gratigny*

PHOTO NO. 4 — Macon-Bibb County firefighters look over the cover of the 2026 Middle Georgia Firefighter Calendar after it was revealed on Monday, Sept. 15, 2025, at Luther Williams Field. *Photo by Jason Vorhees*

PHOTO NO. 5 — Miss Georgia 2025 Audrey Kittila speaks at Rosa Taylor Elementary on Monday, Sept. 15, 2025, while touring Bibb County schools alongside Miss Georgia's Teen 2025 Reagan Moore and Miss Macon's Teen 2026 Londyn Rodgers. The visits mark Family Literacy Week. *Photo by Jason Vorhees*

PHOTO NO. 6 — Miss Georgia's Teen 2025 Reagan Moore speaks to students at Rosa Taylor Elementary on Monday, Sept. 15, 2025, while touring Bibb County schools alongside Miss Georgia 2025 Audrey Kittila and Miss Macon's Teen 2026 Londyn Rodgers. *Photo by Jason Vorhees*

PHOTO NO. 7 — Miss Macon's Teen 2026 Londyn Rodgers takes questions at Rosa Taylor Elementary on Monday, Sept. 15, 2025, while touring Bibb County schools alongside Miss Georgia 2025 Audrey Kittila and Miss Georgia's Teen 2025 Reagan Moore. *Photo by Jason Vorhees*