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Upfront



These photos bring you inside our home. The decorations are pretty, to my eye. Stopping to look at them for a moment many times each day and night is simple, unabashed joy. The fruit of our decorating labor provides more than a month's worth of little rewards. The process itself creates a repeatable ritual that strengthens a family and reinforces its bonds.

I don't do much beyond the "heavy" work. I buy the wreaths and tree from men beneath a temporary tent. I carry them awkwardly from the truck bed through the front door. I rig the wreaths with wire – a tedious task that I walk away from several times before finishing, lest my patience and thumbpads suffer beyond repair. I hang these evergreen rings from our iron balcony railing, naively hoping they align on the first try. I right the tree in its stand, agonizing over its persistent tilt. I carry boxes of ornaments and nativities and artificial snow up the precarious garden level steps. I stack the boxes on the parlor floor and stealthily retreat.

Gabby, while lamenting a lack of helping hands, wraps the tree in lights and loads its branches with heirlooms and tchotchkes and homemade crafts. She's a whirlwind of uncompromising efficiency. She can't abide a job that's half-done.

Jenna has a designer's eye and a huge heart. She fills the scene in from its edges, imagining things into being, working feverishly into the wee of more than a few nights.

Sofia focuses our less-visual senses. She bakes. And makes candy. Quietly, without ceremony. Dishing up the kind of edible, unspoken love I easily understand.

This is how it is now, at our house, as it was last year and – knock on Douglas fir bark – will be next. It makes me happy. I hope the pictures convey a hint of the feelings that the stories behind them evoke in me.



Scott A. Laurer



We're excited about new things to come in 2024 and to sharing them with you.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

WE REMEMBER

Isabelle Mulder passed away peacefully on November 24 at the age of 98. She grew up in Queens, New York, attended Queens College, and married her college sweetheart, Jim, in 1945. Then, as she put it, she "traveled the world with Mobil Oil." After living in Australia, Venezuela, Libya, and Nigeria, the Landings was a perfect choice for Jim and Isabelle Mulder's retirement years.

In 1989, Isabelle and Jim retired to a home next to the fourth tee of Terrapin Point (nee Plantation) on Bluff Oak Retreat. They lived there for 30 of their 69 years of marriage. Isabelle served as a docent at the Green-Meldrim House and Jim was the one of the few World War II veterans giving tours at the Mighty Eighth Army Air Force Museum. They were big band fans and great dancers, and loved Savannah Steve, golf, travel, bridge games, progressive dinners, Mahjong, and Skidaway Community Church.

After Jim passed away in 2014, Isabelle moved to Charlottesville, Virginia, to be near her daughter. Even at 98, Isabelle's sociable, easy-going demeanor made her popular. She epitomized the characteristics of Greatest Generation women, had a great time exploring the world, felt blessed by good fortune and a non-complicated life, and was ready to go. She leaves behind three children, four grandchildren, and six great-grandchildren.

For more info, contact karenmulder@gmail.com.

Karen L. Mulder, Charlottesville, VA

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in particular have a way of enriching our family celebrations and capturing moments in our hearts.

For our upcoming Holiday Stories of Savannah concert, we are delighted to be working with Dr. Bertice Berry, PhD, of Institute for Story to gather an archive of Savannah holiday memories from residents across the community, which will be shared throughout the concert and on our website.

At the Savannah Philharmonic, we love creating lasting memories through music, and we invite you to join us in making many more together this holiday season and beyond.



To purchase matinee tickets or to share your favorite Savannah holiday story, please visit: SavannahPhilharmonic.org.

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on the cover:
The stockings are hung by the chimney with care at the Lauretti household. **HAPPY HOLIDAYS!**

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IT HAPPENED ONE CHRISTMAS

The Biltmore First Opened Its Doors

Story by Philip Schweier
Photos by Heidi Schweier

Asheville, North Carolina – a five-hour drive from Savannah – is the site of one of the largest homes in the United States. Once a symbol of luxury and status, the Biltmore House has evolved into a walk-through exhibit detailing the lives of one of America's wealthiest families. Unlike other one-percenters who might build a monument to their own egos, the home of George W. Vanderbilt II (1862-1914) conveys a life of industry fueled by education, of riches tempered with responsibility, and privilege partnered with preservation.

The later decades of the 19th Century – “the Gilded Age,” according to Mark Twain – was a period of rapid economic growth. Not only did the average American wage-earner see an increase in his or her weekly pay, the industrial tycoons who employed them accumulated massive wealth. Cornelius Vanderbilt (1794-1877) launched a modest ferry service in New York City and grew the family holdings to include railroads, shipping, and other enterprises, making him one of the wealthiest families in America.

Escaping the hectic business atmosphere of New York, Cornelius's grandson George visited the Asheville area and fell in love with the spectacular scenery of the nearby mountains. He decided to build a grand home, inspired by French chateaus. In 1889, he bought up tracts of area farmland – some 125,000 acres – and quickly established a dairy. Though the milk products provided a modest source of revenue, the cow manure helped revitalize the soil after several generations of exhaustive farming.



Frederick Law Olmstead, designer of New York's Central Park, was hired to create the garden and surrounding landscape. He started with a four-mile “driveway,” winding across the land to create the impression the house was located deeper in the wilderness than it was. Trees obscured the house from view until arrival at the esplanade, offering first-time visitors a remarkable “reveal.” As their carriage continued to the front door, guests had ample time to soak in the home's grandeur.

Richard Morris Hunt, who had built many homes for the wealthy, was Biltmore's architect. To facilitate such a large project, a wood-working factory and brick kiln were built on-site, and a three-mile railroad spur was constructed to deliver materials directly. Building the main house required more than 1,000 workers, who were housed at the nearby Biltmore Village.

While the home, stables, and gardens were under construction, Vanderbilt made several trips overseas to purchase furniture and decor, some dating as far back as the 15th Century. It would be six years before Vanderbilt could move in, just in time for the holidays.

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS

In December of 1895, Vanderbilt's house was not yet finished. Amidst the constant chaos of construction, he concentrated on completing as many details as he could. On December 22, he welcomed his mother and 26 other relatives, the largest family gathering since his father's funeral a decade earlier. On Christmas Eve, they gathered in the banquet hall, the ladies dressed in their finest gowns, the gentlemen in formal white tie. A 40-foot spruce provided the aroma of fresh-cut evergreen, and Christmas carols, played by the Imperial Trio, filled the air. Three massive hearths at the end of the room added a cozy warmth to the festive occasion. After dinner, the family exchanged gifts.

The following morning, Vanderbilt welcomed estate employees and their families – more than 200 people – into his home. In the banquet hall, he extended holiday greetings and, with his family's assistance, presented gifts to one and all from beneath the immense Christmas tree. A holiday feast in the adjacent carriage house followed.

More guests arrived after Christmas, to be entertained with horseback riding, hunting, fox-chasing, shooting, and fishing. Following an elaborate New Year's Eve dinner, Vanderbilt and his guests enjoyed an evening of music, dancing, and games. At midnight, the Imperial Trio transitioned from a Strauss waltz to “Auld Lang Syne” as guests raised



ABOVE: George Vanderbilt's massive library reflected his intellectual nature and interest in history and the arts.

OPPOSITE: The banquet hall first hosted the family's Christmas celebration in 1895.

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their glasses in tribute to their gracious host. Vanderbilt gave a brief response before festivities resumed. As one year passed into memory and a new one began, a light snow began falling, transforming the estate into a winter wonderland, a beautiful closing to the first Christmas at Biltmore.

BY THE NUMBERS

The mansion reportedly cost \$5 million – roughly \$180 million in today's terms – to construct. It would be difficult to create today at the current-adjusted price. Despite its vintage appearance, the house offered many innovations, such as electricity, plumbing, a telegraph, centrally controlled clocks, fire alarms, a call bell system, and an Otis elevator that still functions today.

The Biltmore has 250 rooms, with more than 135,000 square feet of living space, plus an attached 12,000-square-foot stable and carriage house, making it – arguably – the largest domestic dwelling ever constructed in the U.S. The largest room is the banquet hall, which measures 42 by 72 feet, with a 70-foot-high barrel-vaulted ceiling. The table can seat 64 guests and is surrounded by rare Flemish tapestries. A trio of hearths spans one end of the room. On the opposite end of the hall is a gallery that houses a 1916 Skinner pipe organ.

The two-story library contains more than 23,000 volumes in eight languages, reflecting Vanderbilt's broad interests in classic literature, art, architecture, history, and horticulture. A concealed passageway leads to the guest rooms, for the convenience of any visitor wishing for something to read before bedtime.

A grand staircase to the left of the front entry leads upstairs – 107 steps spiraling around a four-story, wrought-iron chandelier holding 72 light bulbs. The second-floor landing serves as a formal hall and art gallery, which includes John Singer Sargent portraits of Biltmore's architect and landscaper – Hunt and Olmstead, respectively – commissioned by Vanderbilt for the home. Nearby is his gilded bedroom, which connects to his wife's oval-shaped bedroom through an oak-paneled sitting room.

Third floor guest rooms are named according to the furnishing or artist styles in which they were decorated. The fourth floor features an observatory, with a circular staircase to a rooftop balcony from which Vanderbilt could view his estate.

The basement – the largest in the country – is the service hub of the house. It contains the main kitchen, pastry kitchen, rotisserie kitchen, walk-in larders that featured an early form of refrigeration, the servants' dining hall, and laundry rooms. The basement level also features activity rooms, including a bowling alley, a 70,000-gallon heated swimming pool with underwater lighting, and a gym-

nasium offering then-state-of-the-art equipment. The basement also featured sleeping quarters for kitchen staff.

Servants were housed onsite. There were 21 bedrooms on the fourth floor for female servants, while the men occupied a dormitory above the stable. Biltmore Village, where the construction workers had lived, offered modern rental cottages to estate employees, as well as a post office, shops, a doctor's office, school, and church.

Olmsted incorporated 75 acres of gardens surrounding the house. He constructed a Roman formal garden, a bush and tulip garden, fountains, and a conservatory with individual rooms for palms and roses. He built a bowling green, an outdoor tea room, and a terrace to incorporate the European statuary Vanderbilt collected on his travels. At the opposite end of the esplanade is a limestone wall at the foot of a grassy slope known as The Vista, which is topped with a statue of Diana, goddess of the hunt.

PRIVATE LIVES

At Biltmore, Vanderbilt led the life of a country gentleman. He had always envi-



A pair of sculpted lions greet visitors outside the entrance to the Biltmore mansion.



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sioned a self-supporting estate, like those in Europe. Having a great interest in agriculture, he established various farms for poultry, cattle, and hogs to supervise developments in scientific farming and animal breeding. In 1898, the estate became the site of the Biltmore School of Forestry, the first such school in North America.

On June 1, 1898, Vanderbilt married Edith Stuyvesant Dresser in Paris. She embraced her role as “lady of the manor,” often visiting the residents of Biltmore Village in times of illness or loss or bringing a new mother care items and offering encouragement to the school children. George and Edith’s only child, Cornelia, was born in August of 1900 in Biltmore’s Louis XV room, and grew up on the estate, frequently accompanied by her beloved St. Bernard, Cedric.

In 1912, the Vanderbilts narrowly avoided tragedy aboard the doomed *Titanic*. According to Vanderbilt family lore, George’s mother had a premonition about the ship and advised them against sailing, while another family member – reportedly Edith’s well-travelled sister – warned that, “so many things can go wrong on a maiden voyage.” Changing their ship at the last minute, they had only 18 hours to prepare to sail aboard the *Olympic*, arriving in New York before the sinking. Tragically, a servant named Frederick Wheeler remained on the *Titanic* to oversee their luggage that had already been loaded. Wheeler perished when the ship famously sank.

George Vanderbilt died in 1914 at age 51 from complications following an emergency appendectomy. At the time, he was engaged in the sale of 87,000 acres of his Biltmore estate to the federal government with the proviso that the land remains pristine. Edith completed the sale, and the property became the nucleus of the Pisgah National Forest, the first national forest east of the Mississippi. Burdened with running the large estate, Edith began consolidating her interests, selling Biltmore Estate Industries in 1917 and Biltmore Village in 1921. She intermittently occupied an apartment in the Bachelors’ Wing, until marrying a Rhode Island senator in 1925. She died in Providence in 1958.

In April of 1924, Cornelia married British diplomat John Francis Amherst Cecil. The couple continued living at Biltmore, and their sons, George and William, were born in the Louis XV Room. Cornelia grew restless and eventually left for America for Paris. She divorced John in 1934 and she never returned to the Biltmore, though he continued to live there. She later remarried and settled in England. John died in North Carolina in 1954.

PUBLIC STRUGGLES

Suffering from the Great Depression, the city of Asheville hoped to revitalize the area with tourism. In March of 1930, the family agreed to open Biltmore to the public. Following John Cecil’s death, Biltmore House ceased to be a family residence and became a historic house museum. In 1963, the estate was designated a National Historic Landmark.

Meanwhile, George and William Cecil collaborated to reverse the estate’s financial troubles, working to revive the profitable and self-sustaining enterprise their grandfather had envisioned. After Cornelia died in 1976, they inherited ownership, and the family established a trust – the privately held Biltmore Company – to oversee the property.

In 1985, the former dairy barn was converted into the Biltmore Winery and is now the centerpiece of Antler Hill Village, a complex of gift shops, restaurants, and the Village Hotel. The company is one of the largest employers in the Asheville area, employing thousands of store clerks, waiters, kitchen staff, hotel staff, docents, maintenance personnel, and security guards.

Since the death of William Cecil in October of 2017, a fourth generation manages the company. Members of the Vanderbilt family that remain in the Asheville area have homes off-site, though the mansion is still privately owned. Today, the Biltmore Estate covers approximately 8,000 acres (13 square miles) and is assessed at \$157.2 million. It has become a major tourist attraction in North Carolina, welcoming roughly 1.4 million visitors each year.



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Smells Like Sunday

From the Kitchen
of Scott Laretti

When your family gathers Christmas morning, give them something special on which to nosh. A bagel buffet... perhaps you order a few dozen from one of the iconic makers in New York. Slice red onions and tomatoes, put capers in a little bowl, unwrap cream cheese and load it on a plate. Fixings run the range of your imagination. But be sure to include a big, beautiful serving of love on your table. Make your own cured salmon the star of your yuletide morning meal.

It's easier than you might think. The most significant ingredient, besides the salmon itself, is time. Allow between 24 and 72 hours for the fish to properly cure. If it's maximum flavor from your curing spices that you seek, start the process the morning of December 22.

CHRISTMAS MORNING CURED SALMON

1 large filet (side) of salmon, skin on
Kosher salt
Light brown sugar
Whole spices of your choice – e.g. cumin seeds, coriander seeds, fennel seeds, peppercorns
Zest of 1 lemon and 1 lime, freshly grated

Ensure all bones are removed from salmon. Use tweezers, as necessary.

Make curing mix: To a medium to large mixing bowl, add equal parts of kosher salt and sugar. (Rule of thumb: For each pound of fish, use a cup each of salt and sugar.) "Toast" spice seeds quickly in a saute pan, then grind in a spice or coffee grinder. (Rule of thumb: Use 1 tsp of each spice per pound of fish.) Add ground spices to salt/sugar bowl and mix well. Add citrus zest and mix well.

Cure salmon: Line a rimmed baking sheet with foil. Spread half the curing mix onto the foil. Place salmon skin side down on the mix. Rub remaining curing mix on the exposed skinless side of the salmon, coating completely. Curl the edges of the foil so that the fish is completely enclosed. Wrap the sheet pan with plastic wrap if there are any open-

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ings. Place another sheet pan or a cutting board on top of the salmon and weight it down with a moderately heavy kitchen item, like tomato cans or a Dutch oven. Place the entire set up in the fridge for at least 12 hours. After 12 hours, remove the weights, unwrap the “package” keeping the foil intact, and carefully flip the fish. Rewrap and reweight the flipped fish and return to the fridge for another 12 hours. Twenty-four hours is ample time to cure the salmon, but extending the process to 36, 48, or 72 hours imparts By the time you’ve reached 24 hours, you can certainly enjoy your cured fish — but you can also opt to cure for 36, 48, or 72 total hours imparts more of the curing mix flavors. Whatever duration you choose, employ the 12-hour flip discipline for the duration.

Display and serve: Unwrap the fish and place on a cutting board. Remove the skin with a sharp knife. Garnish with fresh fennel fronds. When ready to serve, slice the salmon thinly. Enjoy on a bagel with all the fixings or on its own.



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- Gator Bowl - Clemson vs Kentucky
- Sun Bowl - Oregon St. vs Notre Dame
- Liberty Bowl - Memphis vs Iowa St.
- Cotton Bowl - Missouri vs Ohio St.
- Peach Bowl - Mississippi vs Penn St.
- Music City Bowl - Auburn vs Maryland
- Orange Bowl - Georgia vs Florida St.
- Arizona Bowl - Toledo vs Wyoming
- Reliaquest Bowl - Wisconsin vs LSU
- Fiesta Bowl - Liberty vs Oregon
- Citrus Bowl - Iowa vs Tennessee
- Rose Bowl - Alabama vs Michigan
- Sugar Bowl - Texas vs Washington

As a tiebreaker this week,
pick the total points in the
Texas/Washington game

*Please, limit one entry per contestant.
Good luck and enjoy the games!*

The Skinnie Football Pick 'Em Pool

The ties have it! Again. Two of our competitors correctly predicted the same number of winners in this edition of the Skinnie Football Pick 'Em Pool. Betsy "The Beast" Contino and "Tuba" Tom Olson (his nickname, not mine) both made 10 out of 15 good guesses. The Titans/Dolphins game had not yet been played by press time, but both picked Miami so we gave them that one. Army/Navy, the only college game on our list, served as the total points tiebreaker. Army held Navy off with a last-second goal line stand to win 17-11, making a total of 28 points. Contino conjured a sum of 31; "Tuba" Tom blew a different tune with 47. Betsy "The Beast" Contino wins!

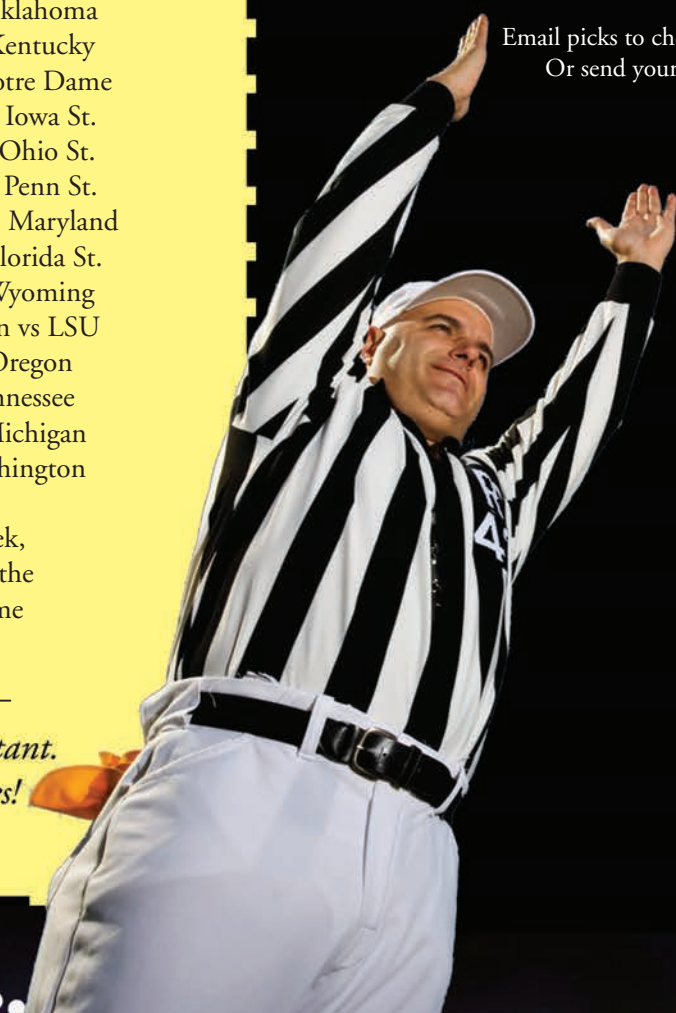
It's time for our annual treat – the Bowl Bonanza. Everyone is welcome. It's easy. Predict the winning team for each game. And get more winners right than the rest of your friends. For the tiebreaker game, predict the total points that the two teams will score (combined). The winner gets a real prize.

We'll begin with the storied RoofClaim.com Boca Raton Bowl, to be played Thursday, December 21. Games continue through January 1. We offer 33 bowls for your picking pleasure. Your entry is due at 5 p.m. on Thursday, December 21.

Email picks to chendrix@theskinnie.com.
Or send your entry the old-fashioned way to:

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Suite 280
Savannah, GA 31411

Alternatively, just drop it by our offices in the Lake Side Center across from Publix.



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BLUE CHRISTMAS?

Do the holidays have you feeling down? Is your mood affecting your career or personal life? Have you noticed changes in your diet or sleeping patterns? These are signs that you may be depressed. And it's not a cause for shame.

Approximately 20 percent of Americans will be diagnosed with depression during their lifetimes. In any given year, about 10 percent of Americans experience symptoms consistent with a diagnosis of depression. St. Joseph's/Candler primary care physician

Dr. Thomas Falace feels that number is even higher locally. He sees patients daily who struggle with symptoms of depression.

"I would encourage people not to be afraid to be seen by a medical professional," Falace, who practices at the health system's Islands offices, says. "We are trained in this. I see people all day long who have symptoms of depression that we are able to treat."

To meet the medical diagnosis of depression, you must experience an interruption or interference with the way you typically live, sustained on most days much of the day for two weeks or longer. Your doctor will consider other conditions that can masquerade as depression, such as changes in thyroid function, certain types of dementia, or substance abuse.

TREATING DEPRESSION

After proper evaluation and correct diagnosis, your doctor can then recommend treatment. The two main treatment tools are medication and counseling. There are many different types of medications, and your doctor will choose one based on your symptoms and other medical factors. For example, if you're not eating and losing weight, there are medications that can help with depression and stimulate appetite, Falace explains. On the other end of the spectrum, some medications can help with symptoms of depression and cause you to lose weight.

PREVENTING DEPRESSION

Falace recommends these simple tactics to boost your mood and prevent feelings of depression:

- Stay active.
- Eat a healthy, balanced diet.
- Maintain interpersonal relationships.
- Find and maintain hobbies.
- Practice meditation, Yoga, or any routine that eases stress.
- Speak to a healthcare professional if you're noticing depression symptoms.



Smart Senior Holiday Party

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Folks 55 and older enjoy major benefits with the area's largest senior program.

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SmartSenior is the most comprehensive senior membership program in southeast Georgia and the South Carolina Lowcountry for people ages 55 years and older. Thousands of satisfied members can attest to the fact that the program has something for everyone.

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- **Bi-monthly newsletter:** Members receive six publications each year, mailed and/or emailed directly.
- **Weekly activities:** Includes fitness classes, Mahjong, sewing society, movies, games, line dancing, and more.
- **Educational health seminars:** Monthly "Lunch and Learn" seminars where members enjoy a complimentary meal and a presentation by a health professional and/or community leader on topics of interest.
- **Medicare counseling:** For assistance in understanding daunting Medicare forms, policies and procedures, a counselor is available by appointment.
- **Special events:** Popular social events such as the Bingo Bash and end-of-year holiday party are offered to members annually.

• **Discover Local:** Discover new places, travel back in time, and peek behind the curtain through special SmartSenior group experiences around Savannah and the surrounding areas.

• **Health screenings:** Includes height/weight/BMI (body mass index), waist-hip ratio, blood pressure, resting heart rate, and oxygen level.

• **Office services:** Includes copies, faxing, secure document shredding, laminating, notary service, library, computer lab with Internet access, and free printing.

• **Merchant discount program:** Members receive exclusive discounts at retail and restaurant establishments throughout the area, such as the St. Joseph's or Candler Hospital cafeterias, and half-off car washes at Auto Shine on Wednesdays.

For further information on gifting memberships, visit www.sjchs.org, or call 912.352.4405, or drop by the SmartSenior office located at #8 Medical Arts Center.



"There are lots of considerations that go into different options, but we always try to tailor medications for each individual patient," Falace says.

In addition to medications, counseling is often recommended. According to Falace, either modality can be effective on its own but they are more effective when used together.

"There are resources in our community to refer people to counseling," Falace says. "I always encourage people to take advantage of that."

Wishing You a Happy Holiday Season



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Dr. Casey Allen, CCC-A



ABOVE: Former race car driver Capt. Eddie Rickenbacker was awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for meritorious service during World War I.

TOP: During World War I, Rickenbacker's Hat in the Ring squadron flew Neiuport planes, very similar to this restored model.

CAPT. EDDIE RICKENBACKER

During World War I, American fighter pilot Edward V. Rickenbacker shot down 26 enemy aircraft, making him the most successful and most decorated flying ace of the war, and earning him the Congressional Medal of Honor. He was also a successful race car driver, an automotive designer, and long-time chief executive of Eastern Airlines.

Rickenbacker was born October 8, 1890, in Columbus, Ohio, into a poor family, the third of eight children. The small house his parents built had no running water, plumbing, or electricity. To help with expenses, he worked before and after school. He also had a devilish streak. As the unofficial leader of "The Horsehead Gang," he led his buddies in acts of petty delinquency in the neighborhood.

After the Wright Brothers first airplane flight, Rickenbacker tried to pilot a bicycle outfitted with an umbrella off a friend's barn

roof – unsuccessfully, of course. But the attempt foreshadowed future aerial ambitions.

When Rickenbacker was 14, his father died from injuries sustained in a brawl. That tragedy compelled the teenager to quit school and join the workforce to help replace his father's lost income.

While working at the Oscar Lear Automobile Company in 1905, Rickenbacker caught the attention of chief engineer Lee Frayer, who took him under his wing. When it came time to compete in the 1906 Vanderbilt Cup race, Frayer brought Rickenbacker to New York as his riding mechanic. Mechanical failure prohibited them from competing, but the experience hooked young Rickenbacker on automobile racing.

At the Columbus Buggy Company, Rickenbacker's work ethic and mechanical acumen impressed his new employer, Harvey S. Firestone, who chose Rickenbacker for

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special assignments. Firestone sent Rickenbacker to Texas to assist Frayer with new engine design, and Rickenbacker stayed on to head up Columbus Buggy's Dallas agency. At 18, he was the chief engineer, experimenter, demonstrator, mechanic, and salesman. With Firestone's approval, he began entering races, winning most of them, to draw attention to his company's car. In 1911, he finished 13th in the inaugural Indianapolis 500. By 1914, "Fast Eddie" Rickenbacker was one of the most famous race drivers in America, earning \$40,000 a year.

During a six-week visit to England to develop a new race car for the Sunbeam Company, Rickenbacker spent much of his spare time watching the Royal Flying Corps practice aerial maneuvers. This aroused his interest in aviation. He recognized a race car driver's expertise with speed and engines would be valuable for pilots, should America enter the war in Europe.

In mid-June of 1917, Rickenbacker found himself in France, where he enlisted in the U.S. infantry. Thanks to contacts with the U.S. Army Air Service personnel stationed in France, he learned to fly at the French

flight school near Toul. After just 25 hours of flight instruction in the air, Rickenbacker was capable of piloting on his own and practicing advanced maneuvers. A skillful negotiator, he soon finagled his way into joining the 1st Pursuit Group, where he came under the mentorship of French flying ace Maj. Raoul Lufbery. Rickenbacker once said, "All I learned, I learned from Lufbery."

Rickenbacker was assigned to the 94th Aero Squadron, which chose an Uncle Sam stovepipe hat tipped inside a gold circle to paint on its planes. One officer remarked, "Well, I guess our hat is in the ring now," and the squadron became known as the Hat-in-the-Ring squadron. The group flew patrols in the St. Mihiel sector of France but Rickenbacker's first sortie almost ended in disaster when he got lost in the fog and barely made it back to base.

On April 29, 1918, Fast Eddie shot down his first enemy plane. A month later, he claimed his fifth victim, becoming an ace and earning the honorary French Croix de Guerre award and Legion of Honor. After his sixth kill on May 30, he was grounded for three and a half months by an ear infection but was

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back in the air for the major St. Mihiel Offensive on September 12, 1918.

Rickenbacker's Hat-in-the-Ring squadron switched from agile, temperamental Nieuport airplanes to more rugged, higher-powered Spad XIII's – a good fit for his aggressive style of attack. Equipped with the new planes, Rickenbacker led a group attack against enemy observation balloons. The giant gasbags appeared easy to bring down but were heavily guarded, and the battle was challenging. Fast Eddie downed five balloons himself.

Although Rickenbacker's reputation was on the rise, the Hat-in-the-Ring squadron's was falling. To boost morale, its commanding officer, Maj. Harold Hartney, chose Rickenbacker, just a lieutenant, as its new commander over several higher-ranking officers. Rickenbacker was committed to rebuilding his team, promising he would never ask them to do anything he wasn't prepared to do himself. Rickenbacker took a solo patrol the next



day, downing two enemy planes. These victories earned him the Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded by President Herbert Hoover in 1931.

In September of 1918 Rickenbacker earned a promotion to captain. As the "War to End All Wars" approached its end, he accelerated his efforts to achieve victory. He spent more hours in the air than any other pilot in the service, downing 15 enemy aircraft in the final six weeks of the war. His 26 victories made him the all-time American ace of aces, a record that stood until World War II. In recognition of his remarkable aerial victories, Rickenbacker received the Distinguished Service Cross a record eight times.

Returning home as a hero, Rickenbacker was toasted in New York City and given a parade in Los Angeles. He turned down lucrative commercial offers but accepted a \$25,000 book deal and a speaking tour worth \$10,000, during which he promoted Liberty Bonds. When released from the Army in No-

ember of 1919, Rickenbacker was offered a promotion to major but declined because he felt the rank of captain was the one that he had truly earned. Consequently, for the rest of his life he was referred to as "Captain Eddie" or "the Captain."

Rickenbacker's name was valuable to any potential business venture. Wealthy industrialist Byron F. Everitt convinced him to develop a new car under the name Rickenbacker Motor Company. After two years of development, the first model was unveiled at the 1922 New York Auto Show. Fierce competition led to disappointing sales. In November of 1927, the company went bankrupt. Rickenbacker looked skyward from the roadways for his next venture.

The same year Rickenbacker had rolled out his first car, 1922, he married Adelaide Frost Durant, a wealthy divorcee. They adopted two sons and the family had homes in Michigan, New York City, and Florida, as Rickenbacker became involved with GM, the Indianapolis Motor Speedway, and Florida Airways. His connections enabled a merger between Eastern Air Transport and Florida Airways, forming Eastern Airlines. He be-



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From 1935 to 1940, Rickenbacker collaborated with aviation artist Clayton Knight to produce a Sunday comic strip. It followed the adventures of barnstormer Ace Drummond as he battled evildoers around the world. The comic was cross-promoted through Rickenbacker's Junior Pilots Club, and was adapted for radio and film.

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came Eastern's general manager in 1935, and three years later bought the rapidly expanding company for \$3.5 million. Under his leadership, Eastern grew into one of the "Big Four" commercial carriers.

In 1940, the courage of Great Britain against Germany's relentless bombing attacks inspired Rickenbacker to support the Allied cause in Europe. He directed Eastern pilots to fly munitions and supplies across the Atlantic to England. He worked with the Royal Air Force and the U.S. Army Air Force on defensive air strategy against the Luftwaffe.

On February 26, 1941, Rickenbacker was a passenger on a Douglas DC-3 airliner that crashed outside Atlanta. Severely injured and soaked in fuel, he lay trapped in the wreckage through the freezing night. When rescuers finally reached him the next morning, he was in such bad shape they thought he was dead and began removing other survivors first. When Rickenbacker eventually arrived at the hospital, the emergency room personnel also believed him dead. His injuries included a fractured skull, a shattered left elbow, a paralyzed left hand, several broken ribs, a crushed hip socket, a broken pelvis, a severed nerve in his left hip, a broken left knee, and a displaced left eyeball. He spent four months in the hospital and after extensive home care he finally healed, getting back to his favorite game of golf.

In October of 1942, Rickenbacker was sent on a tour of air bases in the Pacific Theater of Operations. He and his crew were provided a B17D Flying Fortress for transportation, but faulty navigation equipment directed the bomber hundreds of miles off course until it ran out of fuel ditched in the ocean. Injured to varying degrees, Rickenbacker and seven crewmen drifted for thousands of miles in two small rafts. After two weeks, the American search effort was about to be called off, but Rickenbacker's wife insisted on one more week. Adrift for 24 days, the lost group was eventually rescued. One had died after drinking sea water.

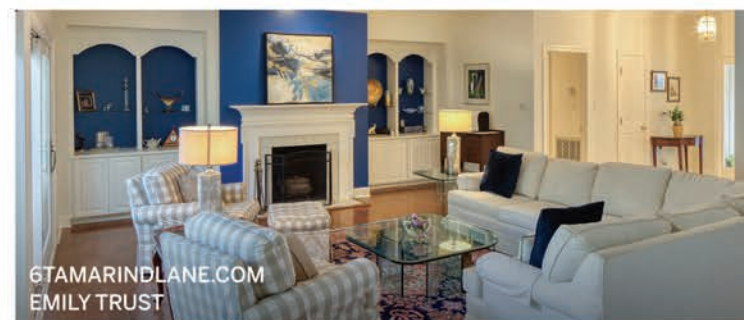
That near-death experience did little to discourage Rickenbacker. He arranged a fact-finding mission to the Soviet Union to provide technical assistance with American aircraft, visiting Soviet bases in the Aleutian Islands, Burma, China, India, the Middle East, and North Africa. He made observations at every stop and interviewed by British Prime Minister Winston Churchill upon his return.

Following the war, Eastern became the most profitable commercial airline in the U.S. However, by the late 1950s, its fortunes had declined, and in October of 1959 Rickenbacker was removed from his position as CEO. In 1963, he resigned as Eastern's chairman of the board. In retirement, he became a sought-after speaker on the Soviet Union and the Cold War.

In 1972, Rickenbacker had a stroke that left him in a coma for a short time. He recovered enough to accompany his wife to Zurich in 1973 for treatment for her failing vision, where he contracted pneumonia and died at the age of 82. eulogy given by legendary aviator Lt. Gen. Jimmy Doolittle. At the time of his death, Rickenbacker was the last living Medal of Honor recipient from the U.S. Army Air Service.



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With its mom keeping a close watch, this baby owl paid a visit to the Canham residence on Tarrow Ridge Road. "He wanted a closer look at us," David Canham says.

"Wild Things" is a regular feature in The Skinny, featuring your photographs of our beloved island. Email your high-resolution photos to production@theskinny.com. Please include your name and a little info about where the photo was taken.

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HEAR GREAT SPEAKERS

WHAT: Kiwanis Club of Skidaway
WHEN: Thursday mornings at 8 a.m.
WHERE: Palmetto Club
HOW MUCH: Free to attend, including any refreshments, which includes coffee/tea (compliments of Morgan Stanley) and occasional pastries from Auspicious Bakery.
CONTACT: Michael Klavon, 912.306.0474 for gate pass
WHAT ELSE: Membership is open to Savannah/Chatham area residents. Visit www.kiwanisofskidaway.com for more information.

WHO NEW?

WHAT: New Neighbors
WHEN: Visit www.landingsnewneighbors.com to see our calendar
CONTACT: Visit our website or contact Jody at nnnewmember@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: The club offers more than 250 different activities from biking, golf, pickleball, walking groups or fishing to Mahjong, Bridge, Needle-arts and Canasta. We have exciting military tours and special events for you to enjoy right here on Skidaway Island.

GOTTA LOVE IT

WHAT: Landlovers membership / open to all Skidaway Islanders
HOW MUCH: Each \$30 membership fee covers one household of one or two adults.
CONTACT: Vicki Knapp at landloversmembership@gmail.com or visit www.landingslandlovers.com for more information.
WHAT ELSE: The membership year runs from September 1 through August 31. Landlovers is a philanthropic and social organization dedicated to enriching the Landings community and Skidaway Island at large. Landlovers sponsors year-round social activities and fundraising events to support student scholarships and multiple non-profit service organizations.

FIBER OPTICS

WHAT: Fiber Guild of the Savannahs Exhibit
WHEN: Dec. 1 through 31
WHERE: JEA Art Gallery, 5111 Abercorn St.
HOW MUCH: Free and open to the public
CONTACT: Vicky Lunick, 912.355.8111
WHAT ELSE: The Fiber Guild of the Savannahs is a group of fiber artists who share inspiration and techniques using a wide variety of fiber-related arts, such as spinning, weaving, dyeing, quilt-

ing, knitting, basketry, rug making, and paper manipulation. The group has a strong sense of community service and volunteerism, demonstrating traditional pioneer crafts to children and families at the Oatland Island Wildlife Center. People of all skill levels are invited to join the guild.

ON THE HOUSE

WHAT: Casual gatherings at members' homes
WHEN: Saturday, Dec. 16, 6-8 p.m.
WHERE: At LL host homes
COST: Free
CONTACT: Becky Dominguez, beckydom61@aol.com, or Connie Rice, csrice1948@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: We are looking for people to host at their homes. Please reach out to Becky Dominguez if you would be interested in hosting some of your neighbors for the evening. Guests will be assigned to various homes and bring an appetizer to share and their own libation.

CIVIL CELEBRATIONS

WHAT: "Christmas in Wartime" - holiday performances at Green-Meldrim House
WHEN: Tuesday, Dec. 26 - Thursday, Dec. 28; 6, 6:30, 7, 7:30, 8 p.m. each day
WHERE: Green-Meldrim House, 14 W. Macon St. (Madison Square)
HOW MUCH: Adults - \$18 in advance, \$20 at the door; Students (6-17) - \$10 in advance, \$12 at the door
CONTACT: Jamie Credle, jcredle@green-meldrimhouse.org, 912.233.3845
WHAT ELSE: Living history performers in period costumes recount stories of the holidays in Savannah during the Civil War years. Experience music, dancing, parlor games, and ghost stories. Admission times will be adhered to. Attendees must be able to walk up and down stairs and maneuver in low light levels. Purchase tickets online at www.GreenMeldrimHouse.org. Reservations recommended; attendance is limited

SHALL WE DANCE?

WHAT: Ballroom dance instruction
WHEN: Jan. 8, 7-8:30 pm
WHERE: Skidaway United Methodist Church
HOW MUCH: \$15 per person for each session
CONTACT: Marilee Dalbey, 334.797.9952 or marileedalbey@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: Get your dancing shoes out and join us to waltz in January. Professional ballroom instructors will teach this partner-style dance. Instruction is from 7-8 p.m., with free dance and line

FOOD FOR FELINES

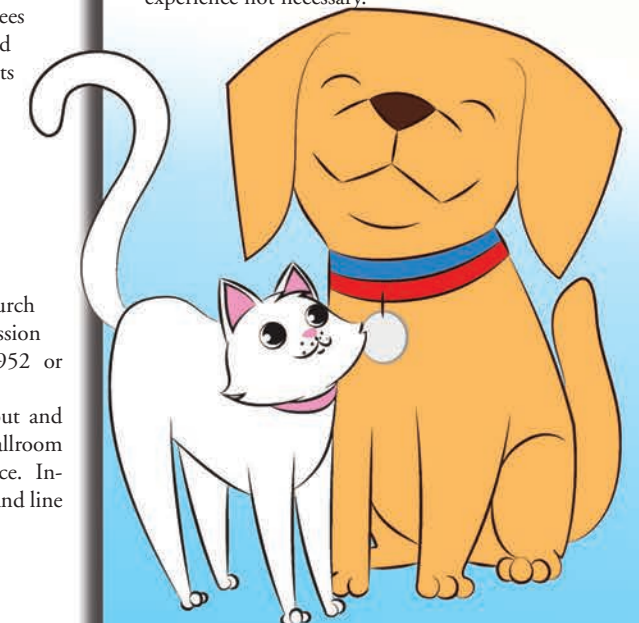
WHAT: Kitten food drive for the Humane Society of Greater Savannah
WHEN: Ongoing
WHERE: Humane Society Adoption Center, 7215 Sallie Mood Dr.
CONTACT: Call Rosemary Longueira at 598.2875 or drop donations at 22 Long Island Road, Oakridge
WHAT ELSE: With so many kittens in foster care, the Humane Society is in need of Fancy Feast canned kitten food, Purina dry kitten chow, and kitten replacement milk (such as KMR) for the neonatal bottle fed kittens. Soft fuzzy blankets would also be appreciated. Donations can be dropped off during normal business hours (Tuesday-Saturday, 1:00-6:00 p.m.) or off-hours in the donation bins outside the Adoption Center on Sallie Mood Drive.

ANIMAL HOUSE

WHAT: Call for volunteers
WHEN: Flexible hours to meet your needs and schedule, various tasks
WHERE: The Humane Society Thrift Shop, 7215 Sallie Mood Dr.
CONTACT: Volunteer coordinator, Yvonne Hemphill, 603.502.6906
WHAT ELSE: No experience necessary. All proceeds from the thrift shop go to supporting the care of the shelter's animals.

HORSE SENSE

WHAT: Pegasus Riding Academy volunteers needed
WHERE: Old Roberds Dairy, 2500 Tennessee Ave., Savannah
CONTACT: For information and directions, visit www.prasav.org or call 912.547.6482
WHAT ELSE: Pegasus Riding Academy is a therapeutic riding program providing safe, professional and ethical equine-assisted activities for individuals with physical, mental and emotional disabilities. Volunteers are needed to assist these special children. Horse experience not necessary.



dancing following. Please wear comfortable clothing and hard-sole shoes. You must be a member of Landlovers to attend.

NATURE'S CALLING

WHAT: Coastal expert talk
WHEN: Jan. 18, 4 p.m.
WHERE: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 3 West Ridge Rd.
HOW MUCH: Free for FOSA members, \$5 for guests, payable online or at the door
CONTACT: friendsofskidawayaudubon@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: Attendees are asked to pre-register online at SkidawayAudubon.org. Guest speaker will be Stacia Hendricks, Little St. Simons lodge director and noted naturalist.

GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

WHAT: Landlovers Games Day
WHEN: Jan. 19, 8:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.
WHERE: Palmetto Ballroom
HOW MUCH: \$60 per person for food and play. Register as 4 person team, but participants must register individually, designating a table captain.
WHAT ELSE: You do not have to be a Landings Club member to participate, you must be a member of Landlovers. If you have not renewed or wish to join, please visit www.landingslandlovers.com to join our organization. A light breakfast will be served upon your arrival and a gourmet lunch buffet is available. Registration is open until January 15 at www.landingslandlovers.com under Happenings/Fundraisers.

DINNER AND A SHOW

WHAT: Trolley to the Arts, "Classical Mystery Tour"
WHEN: Saturday, Jan. 20
WHERE: The Lucas Theater
HOW MUCH: Tickets are on sale now on the LL website; first come, first served - \$50/person includes trolley and balcony theater seats (Please note there is no elevator)
CONTACT: Marilee Dalbey, 334-797-9952
WHAT ELSE: Ride with friends from Skidaway to the Lucas Theater to enjoy the Savannah Philharmonic's Beatles Classical Mystery Tour. Trolley departs at 5 p.m. and returns at approximately 10:30 p.m. Attendees will have time to enjoy dinner downtown on their own.

GATHERING GROCERIES

WHAT: Packing groceries for Second Harvest
WHEN: 9 - 11 a.m., Feb. 2, April 5, June 7
WHERE: Second Harvest, 2501 E President St.
CONTACT: Terry Lewis, terrylewis324@gmail.com.

MARKET FORCES

WHAT: The Market at 3 West Ridge, a shopping boutique and spring plant sale
WHEN: Feb. 6, 4:30-7:30 p.m. with complimentary wine and light hors d'oeuvres; Feb. 7, 10 a.m.-5 p.m.; and Feb. 8, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., with café lunch available.
WHERE: St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 3 West Ridge Rd., across from Publix
HOW MUCH: \$5 covers admission for all three days
CONTACT: Kathryn McLearn, 912.598.4520
WHAT ELSE: Join us as we celebrate our 25th year of fundraising for organizations that make life better for some of Savannah's most vulnerable children. Vendors will offer unique clothing and accessories, whimsical and elegant jewelry, luxurious household items, sure-to-please gifts, and a huge collection of vibrant spring plants.

FINANCIAL AID

WHAT: AARP Tax-Aide Program needs volunteers
WHEN: Training in Dec. and Jan.; Tax preparation starts Feb. 1 for 10 weeks; hours and days are flexible
WHERE: Chatham SW and Bull Street Libraries
CONTACT: Volunteer coordinator John Gerardi, 912.661.8705 or johngerardi@hotmail.com
WHAT ELSE: This program provides free tax preparation for low- to moderate-income families, as well as the elderly and people with disabilities. AARP Tax-Aide saves underserved individuals/families millions in preparation fees and helps taxpayers claim millions in refunds, which can be used to reduce poverty. Tax preparers will be trained to become IRS-certified. Volunteers are also needed to help with intake/front desk.

TAXATION REPRESENTATION

WHAT: Opportunities for volunteer income tax assistance with Neighborhood Improvement Association
WHEN: starting in January, flexible hours from 9 a.m. - 8 p.m.
WHERE: several sites in Savannah, Pembroke, Rincon, Richmond Hill and Hinesville
CONTACT: Tiffany Carter, tcarter@niacdc.org or 912.447.5577
WHAT ELSE: This program helps underserved communities by offering free tax preparation. No experience necessary. Volunteers include greeters/screeners and tax preparers

HELP AROUND THE HOUSE

WHAT: Habitat for Humanity volunteers wanted

WHEN: 8:30 a.m. - 3 p.m., Tuesdays and Wednesdays, possibly Thursdays
WHERE: locations vary
CONTACT: Mark Piven, 912.598.0323
WHAT ELSE: Prior experience is not necessary. Many volunteers learn on the job and only do whatever they feel comfortable with. Tools are provided.

CARING WITH CASSEROLES

WHAT: Casseroles for Safe Shelter
WHEN: Every 3rd Tuesday
WHERE: Dropoff at 2 Moonrise Circle; Other locations TBD
CONTACT: Sue Souls, LLcommservice@gmail.com or smsouls@gmail.com

FORE LADIES ONLY

WHAT: Ladies 9-Hole Golf Group
WHEN: Tuesdays (Tee times from Chelsea system)
WHERE: Varies each week
HOW MUCH: Only for events that include catering for the club.
CONTACT: Jan Rosenbaum at LandloverLadies9@gmail.com or jesr7915@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: Landlover Ladies 9-hole Golf welcomes those who have a basic understanding of the rules, pace of play and have a GHIN number. Our focus is on having fun with a casual get together afterwards. The Landing Club golf and Landlovers memberships are required.

HOCUS POCUS

WHAT: Landings Magic Society
WHEN: 7 p.m., second Thursday of the month, Oct. through May
WHERE: Plantation Club card room
CONTACT: Jim Ruhl, 912.856.3948, jsruhl@gmail.com or Bill Sickels, 912.598.9123 or

SHOP TALK

WHAT: Green-Meldrim House Gift Shop - Volunteers Needed
WHEN: Ongoing
WHERE: Green-Meldrim House, 14 W. Macon St. - Madison Square
HOW MUCH: Training provided
CONTACT: Jamie Credle, jcredle@green-meldrimhouse.org or 912.233.3845
WHAT ELSE: Request for two shifts per month. Please visit GreenMeldrimHouse.org for more information.

MARCO POLO GROUP

WHAT: Landlovers International Group
WHEN: 6:30 p.m., third Monday of the month, October through May,

WHERE: Member homes
CONTACT: Denise Larson, lasondenise8@gmail.com; Elizabeth Cowell, elizcowe@gmail.com; Sue Souls, smsouls@gmail.com
WHAT ELSE: The Marco Polo group is for our international friends. If you were born in or have lived at least one year (including an academic year) outside the U.S., you are eligible to join. Attendees are asked to bring an international appetizer to share as well as their own beverage and glass. Must be a Landlovers member. Membership is open to all residents of Skidaway Island.

WALK AND TALK

WHAT: Landlovers walking group
WHEN: Wednesdays and Saturdays
WHERE: Starting places changes monthly; info is on website "Calendar"
CONTACT: Email Bev Dalrymple at bevda100@gmail.com to sign up
WHAT ELSE: Looking for walking buddies? Join our morning walking group. Walking pace is brisk but "talkable." This is a great way to get some exercise, see the island and chat with friends. You must be a Landlovers member to participate.

BATH AND BODY WORKS

WHAT: Landlovers community service toiletry collection

WHEN: ongoing
WHERE: Drop-off at 7 Heartwood Court
CONTACT: Linda Brownlee, 912.963.7229
WHAT ELSE: Are you traveling and staying at a hotel? If you have any unused hotel soaps, shampoos, or lotions, please bring them back to Savannah. Share your vacation with Social Apostolate, which works with poor, homeless and disabled people in different ways including providing showers for those in need. No mouthwash or larger sized toiletries, please.

BODY AND SOUL

WHAT: Mat Pilates and Sit-Fit exercise classes at Skidaway Island United Methodist Church (SIUMC)
WHEN: Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. Mat Pilates, 9:15-10:10 a.m.; Sit Fit: 10:15-11:10 a.m.
WHERE: Bailey Hall at SIUMC, 54 Diamond Causeway
HOW MUCH: \$5 per class for 8 or more classes per month. \$6.25 per class for 7 or fewer classes per month.
CONTACT: For more info or to register, call Elena Bennett, ACSM-certified fitness instructor at 404.510.6042
WHAT ELSE: Mat Pilates participants must bring an exercise mat and be able to get up/down from the floor. Sit-Fit participants should wear

athletic shoes. Everyone should bring a water bottle.

LOSS MITIGATION

WHAT: Pandemic support group meeting
WHEN: Wednesdays at 6 p.m.
WHERE: St. Peter's Episcopal Church Library
HOW MUCH: Free
CONTACT: Suzanne at St. Peter's, 598.7242
WHAT ELSE: Many of us have lost friends or family, and pandemic isolation has made dealing with these losses difficult. Dr. Stevens Peirsol will guide the group, offering those who would like to share and find help in processing loss.

MEETING OF THE MINDS

WHAT: Stroke Survivors
WHEN: Third Thursday of every month, 4-5 p.m.
WHERE: Messiah Lutheran Church, 1 West Ridge Rd.
HOW MUCH: Free
CONTACT: Shirley Nack, 598.7047
WHAT ELSE: Share your experiences with stroke survivors. At our meetings we listen and learn what other survivors have accomplished in order to return to an active lifestyle.

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ACROSS

- 1. View with a skew
- 5. Involuntary twitch
- 10. Tip, as a hat
- 14. Leave one's mark on
- 15. One of the Obama girls
- 16. Hendrix hairdo
- 17. Publisher of kids' books
- 19. Word before crazy or fry
- 20. "So ___!"
- 21. Record of hours worked
- 23. Stun gun
- 25. Blustery
- 26. Roll call mark
- 29. Flash of light
- 31. Advil target
- 32. Child-rearing
- 37. Stray, in a way
- 38. Economical
- 39. Pasture sound
- 40. Body of voters
- 42. City near Phoenix
- 43. Peculiar habit
- 44. Still packaged
- 46. Wear black, perhaps
- 48. Vocal cords, slangily
- 50. Former South African policy
- 53. Rose oil
- 57. It may be dominant
- 58. Satisfactory
- 60. Something pumped
- 61. Nautical hazard
- 62. Threads in shreds
- 63. Quitter's word
- 64. How some things are contested
- 65. Outdated expletive

DOWN

- 1. Numero uno
- 2. Eczema symptom
- 3. Yearning
- 4. Tailor's task
- 5. F.I.C.A. funds it
- 6. Sticky stuff

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- 7. Moving about
- 8. Leveling wedge
- 9. Defensive spray
- 10. Debonair
- 11. Frequently
- 12. Type of rice
- 13. Milestone birthday
- 18. Ground beef option
- 22. Playground fixture
- 24. Foggy state
- 26. Cathedral nook
- 27. Get-out-of-jail money
- 28. Indispensable condition
- 29. 2010 remake, "True ___"
- 30. Suspect showcase
- 33. Gear-shift position
- 34. Car protector
- 35. Amount to win by
- 36. Prod into action
- 38. Prison stretch
- 41. Up-to-date
- 42. Frank topper
- 45. Shipshape
- 46. Orlando NBA team
- 47. "Don Giovanni," for one
- 48. Embroidered loop
- 49. Anagram of "ailed"
- 51. Greasy spoon fare
- 52. Say again
- 54. Alpine transport
- 55. Pond dweller
- 56. Take a breather
- 59. Tissue layer

Puzzle answers, page 41



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