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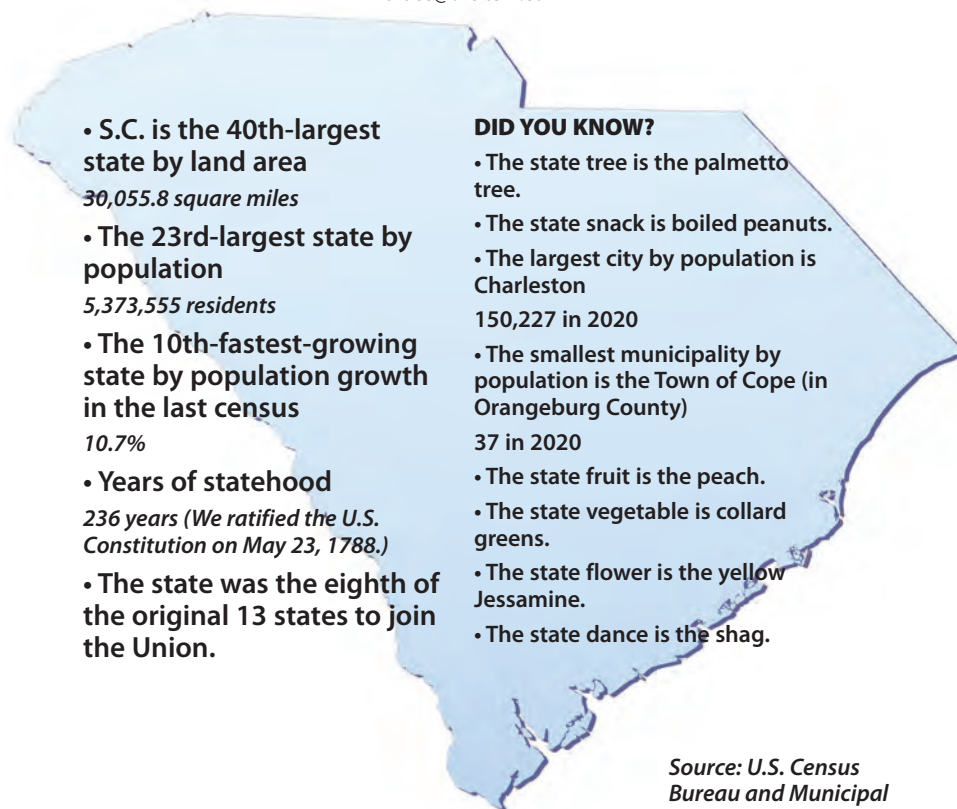
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## SOUTH CAROLINA AT A GLANCE

BY BRUCE MILLS  
[bruce@theitem.com](mailto:bruce@theitem.com)



- S.C. is the 40th-largest state by land area  
30,055.8 square miles
- The 23rd-largest state by population  
5,373,555 residents
- The 10th-fastest-growing state by population growth in the last census  
10.7%
- Years of statehood  
236 years (We ratified the U.S. Constitution on May 23, 1788.)
- The state was the eighth of the original 13 states to join the Union.

- DID YOU KNOW?**
- The state tree is the palmetto tree.
  - The state snack is boiled peanuts.
  - The largest city by population is Charleston  
150,227 in 2020
  - The smallest municipality by population is the Town of Cope (in Orangeburg County)  
37 in 2020
  - The state fruit is the peach.
  - The state vegetable is collard greens.
  - The state flower is the yellow Jessamine.
  - The state dance is the shag.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau and Municipal Association of South Carolina

## The impact of being informed about your community

Thank you for reading this June/July edition of *The Sumter Item Impact*. It's full of stories and information that will help you better understand the community that surrounds you.

From a list of things to do around the Midlands and Pee Dee to results of the June primaries, *The Item Impact* will help you be more informed. From feature stories about a captain at the fire department to a double Dutch competition and women in the military, *The Item Impact* will help you feel more connected to your neighbors. Learn about Social Security topics, veterans' resources and recent happenings with our local government.



Kayla Green

Read about how a woman is using food and faith to help those in need and about how an annual tennis tournament brings economic impact to Sumter.

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36 W. LIBERTY ST., SUMTER, S.C. 29150  
(803) 774-1200

**Vince Johnson**  
PUBLISHER  
[vince@theitem.com](mailto:vince@theitem.com)

**Kayla Green**  
EXECUTIVE EDITOR  
[kayla@theitem.com](mailto:kayla@theitem.com)  
(803) 774-1235

**Jill Burrus**  
CUSTOMER SERVICE MANAGER  
CLASSIFIEDS, SUBSCRIPTIONS AND  
DELIVERY  
[jill@theitem.com](mailto:jill@theitem.com)  
(803) 774-1212

**Melanie Smith**  
ASSISTANT EDITOR  
[melanie@theitem.com](mailto:melanie@theitem.com)  
(803) 774-1293

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### Impact Item Sales Reps

**Karen Cave**  
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**Devin McDonald**  
[devin@theitem.com](mailto:devin@theitem.com)  
(803) 983-0786

**Mark Pekuri**  
[mark@theitem.com](mailto:mark@theitem.com)  
(803) 464-8917

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## Government

# Penny tax and block grant funding were on Sumter city, county agendas in the past month

BY BRYN EDDY  
bryn@theitem.com

This is the time of year when Sumter County and City of Sumter agendas are dense with the word "budget." With the start of the fiscal year on July 1, Sumter leaders have been hard at work finalizing 2024-25 fiscal year budgets. Additionally, officials have been preparing for the penny tax referendum to show up on the ballot in November. Here are some of the main headlines.

## SUMTER OFFICIALS DEFINE LIST FOR WHAT PENNY TAX COULD PAY FOR IF VOTERS APPROVE IT IN NOVEMBER ELECTION

Improvements to multiple parks, both the City of Sumter's downtown and that of the Town of Mayesville, road improvements and more are on the list for what the penny tax, if approved, might cover.

The 2024 Capital Penny Sales Tax Commission, which is made up of six locals, was the brainpower behind creating the proposed list, and Sumter County Council has the power to vote up or down the list, and they cannot make changes to it, according to earlier reporting from *The Sumter Item*.

If the Capital Penny Sales Tax, also called the Penny for Progress initiative, gets a majority approval from voters this November, there will be an added charge of 1% of the sales tax imposed that will fund capital projects, and it will be active for no more than seven years if voters approve it.

This added charge of 1% of the sales tax would apply to most items except non-prepared food items (groceries), prescription drugs and medical supplies.

"We firmly believe the projects will move us forward and best prepare our entire community for generations of growth and prosperity," commission member Earl Wilson told council and the public during the May 28 meeting.



JOE PERRY / SUMTER COUNTY GOVERNMENT

The 2024 Capital Penny Sales Tax Commission is made up of six local residents, Traci Nelson, David Bagwell, Nancy Williams, Herb McClary, Earl Wilson and Kimberly Rauschenbach.

### Here is the proposed list:

- \$13,000,000** toward emergency radios and pagers
- \$14,000,000** toward county fire trucks
- \$5,000,000** toward city fire trucks
- \$1,500,000** toward an EMS station on Stadium Road. This would be a "new 4,000 sq. ft. satellite facility to include a two-bay truck port," according to public documents.
- \$1,000,000** toward four new EMS ambulances
- \$2,000,000** toward industrial infrastructure. It's to "construct a 'Pad Ready' industrial site approximately 200,000 sq. ft. with options to expand for industrial recruitment," according to public documents.
- \$1,750,000** toward intersection safety improvements
- \$2,500,000** toward Bobby Richardson Park Improvements. It's to "transform the park into a state-of-the-art Baseball Complex to include a practice facility, increased parking capacity, and two new entrances for better accessibility," according to public documents.
- \$2,800,000** toward 15 new Patriot Park pickleball courts and added parking
- \$2,750,000** toward downtown building improvements and acquisitions, including Liberty Center upgrades
- \$21,000,000** toward county paving and resurfacing
- \$3,000,000** toward rebuilding the Stadium Road Fire Station
- \$1,000,000** toward a fire department training facility
- \$6,000,000** toward federal state road construction on U.S. 378. It's to reconnect "the communities and services north and south of the US-378 Bypass at Wesmark and Miller Roads to improve safety for drivers and pedestrians and enhance mobility for all travelers," according to public documents.
- \$10,000,000** toward a state road resurfacing match. "This project will be used to draw down additional funds from the State Department of Transportation to prioritize and expedite critical state road projects in Sumter County," according to public documents.
- \$3,250,000** toward improving the public services buildings
- \$1,500,000** toward industrial property acquisition
- \$2,600,000** toward Dillon Park improvements
- \$4,000,000** toward community park playground improvements. It would "[e]nhance public parks with infrastructure that adds safety and security, as well as modern playground equipment accessible for all children to include Swan Lake, Birnie Center, Crosswell, Catchall-Shaw, Shiloh, Rafting Creek,

SEE **AGENDAS**, PAGE A13

# Sumter has several structures recognized on historic registry that are still used today

BY BRYN EDDY  
bryn@theitem.com

Established in 1800, according to [sumtersc.gov](http://sumtersc.gov), Sumter County is dense with historically significant places.

Here are a few that are recognized by the National Register of Historic Places.

## SUMTER COUNTY COURTHOUSE, 141 N. MAIN ST.

William Augustus Edwards, a South Carolina architect who designed a lot of the state's courthouses in the early 1900s, designed the Sumter County Courthouse, according to [nationalregister.sc.gov](http://nationalregister.sc.gov).

When voters approved the 2014 Penny for Progress initiative, the courthouse got a facelift.

According to the county's website, the courthouse "received a much-needed renovation as new energy-efficient windows were installed and a new elevator tower was added to the structure."

Additionally, the main courtroom was improved, and the \$3 million project helped return the historic structure to its original glory.

## OPERA HOUSE, 21 N. MAIN ST.

Constructed in 1893, Sumter's opera house housed Sumter's first theater on the second floor.

"This structure housed many of the traveling road shows that toured the country in the late 19th century," according to [nationalregister.sc.gov](http://nationalregister.sc.gov).

According to earlier reporting from *The Sumter Item*, the historic structure will undergo \$15 million

in renovations this year.

There are plans to expand the venue's lobby, entrance, dressing room and backstage amenities. Upon completion, the opera house will be connected to 19 N. Main St. The stage and seating within the opera house will not undergo any changes.

## TEMPLE SINAI, 11 CHURCH ST.

Sumter's Jewish community was one of South Carolina's largest in the early 19th century, according to [nationalregister.sc.gov](http://nationalregister.sc.gov).

In 1895, the Sumter Hebrew Benevolent Society and the Sumter Society of Israelites merged under the name of the Sumter Society of Israelites, according to [nationalregister.sc.gov](http://nationalregister.sc.gov), and purchased a then-empty lot on the corner of Church Street and West Hampton Avenue to build a synagogue. By 1906, there was a wood-frame building on the lot, and today's brick sanctuary, Temple Sinai, was also built during the early 20th century.

"Congregation Sinai was born in the late 19th century, and by the 1930s, about 90 families were members. The congregation thrived for many years before facing a sharp decline in membership at the end of the 20th century, which led members to consider the future of the temple," according to [templesinainsumter.org](http://templesinainsumter.org). "Out of these considerations was born the Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, which opened its doors in 2018. Today, Temple Sinai serves as the home of both the Temple Sinai Jewish History Center and Congregation Sinai and continues to function as the center for Jewish life in Sumter, South Carolina."



Sumter County Courthouse is renovated in October 2018 as part of a Penny for Progress project.

SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS



Sumter Opera House was built in 1893 and has been renovated several times through the years, with \$15 million in renovations planned for this year.

Temple Sinai Jewish History Center, part of the Sumter County Museum, contains exhibits to teach visitors about the Holocaust.



## Growth

# Veterans resources are expanding

Sumter has a state-of-the-art VA Clinic, Community Based Outpatient Clinic and will soon have a 104-bed veterans nursing home

BY BRYN EDDY

bryn@theitem.com

Late last year, Sumter's Community Based Outpatient Clinic, or CBOC, which is a part of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' Columbia VA Health Care System, opened its doors after a significant expansion, ushering in more opportunity for Sumter-area veterans to seek quality health care close to home.

"The Columbia VAHCS comprises the Wm. Jennings Bryan Dorn VA Medical Center and seven community-based outpatient clinics located throughout South Carolina in Anderson, Florence, Greenville, Orangeburg, Rock Hill, Spartanburg and Sumter, serving more than 90,000 veterans annually in 36 of 46 counties in South Carolina," according to a news release. "The Columbia VA is a level 1b teaching hospital, providing a full range of patient care services, with state-of-the-art technology, education and research. Comprehensive health care is provided through primary care, tertiary care and long-term care in areas of medicine, surgery, psychiatry, physical medicine and rehabilitation."

At 407 N. Salem Ave, not far from Riley Park, this CBOC has served more than 5,000 veterans since November 2023 when it started operating at a larger capacity.

Valerie Brunson, director of Sumter County Veterans Affairs, told *The Sumter Item*

before the expansion was underway that the North Salem location outgrew the number of patients it could serve, prompting not only the expansion on that property, but also the construction of Sumter's new Veterans Affairs Clinic at 245 Bultman Drive near the Sumter Mall.

According to former reporting from *The Sumter Item*, many retired military members remain in Sumter after their active service, and with the newly expanded CBOC and new VA Clinic, these veterans now have health care access right at their back door.

There was a ceremony celebrating the opening of the significantly larger CBOC at 407 N. Salem Ave. on June 14.

"The new clinic enhances the health care services available to veterans in the area, ensuring they receive the quality care they deserve," according to the news release. "We understand the importance of providing accessible and comprehensive health care services to our veterans, and the new Sumter CBOC plays a crucial role in this mission."

Sumter-area veterans have an array of resources available to them close to home thanks to the new VA Clinic and the newly expanded CBOC, and they're about to have even more resources to take advantage of with the new nursing home that is in its latter phases of construction.

Predicted to be completed in mid- to late October, the



BRYN EDDY / THE SUMTER ITEM

**A 104-bed nursing home for Sumter veterans is being built on North Wise Drive. The \$71.4 million project is predicted to be completed in fall 2024.**

104-bed facility is under construction on more than 70 acres at 915 N. Wise Drive, according to earlier reporting from *The Sumter Item*.

In 2019, South Carolina Department of Mental Health was directed to make a recommendation for a future location to place a state veterans' nursing home facility in the central part of the state.

In total, the project cost \$71.4 million, a combination of federal money from the U.S. Veterans Administration and state matching money, said Tracy LaPointe, director of the S.C. Department of Mental Health's public information office. The Veterans Administration approved \$28.8 million in reimbursable money, and the department received \$42.6 million for the

project in its fiscal year 2022 appropriations.

When the facility opens, veterans will reside in either single- or double-occupancy rooms. The facility is planned to have a chapel, barber shop, activities room, bistro, physical therapy room and pharmacy.

"State veteran nursing homes provide eligible veterans the residential care of professional nursing and custodial care staff when they or their primary caregivers are no longer able to provide the requisite assistance at home," Secretary of Veterans' Affairs' Todd McCaffrey told *The Sumter Item* last year. "The Sumter facility is a further example of South Carolina's appreciation and investment in sustaining veter-

an quality of life in our state. With nearly 400,000 veterans living in our state, nearly 45% over the age of 65, state veteran nursing homes extend a degree of comfort and dignity closer to home and honors that veteran's service to the nation, often in their time of greatest need."

According to LaPointe, eligibility for admission into a state veterans nursing home is as follows: a veteran served active duty with an honorable discharge, a veteran has been a resident of South Carolina for the previous 12 months, and a veteran meets Veterans Administration criteria for skilled or intermediate nursing home care. The operator of the facility will handle all admission requests.

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## Education



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

From left, Crestwood High School valedictorian Reymart Velasco, Lakewood High School valedictorian Lakira McCauley and Sumter High School valedictorian Jeshua Espiritu graduated in May.

# Top recent storylines from Sumter School District

BY BRUCE MILLS

bruce@theitem.com

## 1. VALEDICTORIANS LEAD THE WAY

Sumter School District's three valedictorians for the Class of 2024 were Reymart Velasco at Crestwood High School, Lakira McCauley at Lakewood High and Jeshua Espiritu at Sumter High. They all achieved straight A's throughout high school and weighted GPAs of at least 5.3.

Velasco is planning to attend University of South Carolina in Columbia to major in computer science. McCauley will major in nursing at University of South Carolina Upstate in Spartanburg, and Espiritu plans to major in computer engineering at Clemson University.

## 2. BOARD PASSES FIRST READING TO REMOVE 50% GRADE FLOOR

A policy to remove the 50% quar-



terly grade floor and give students final grades based on their performance passed first reading in a 5-4 vote at Sumter School District's Board of Trustees' meeting on June 10.

Board members voting in favor of the motion included Shery White, who

made the motion, Jeff Zell, Bonnie Disney, Daniel Palumbo and the Rev. Ralph Canty. Trustees voting against the motion included Shawn Ragin, Matthew "Mac" McLeod, Brittany English and Tarah Johnson.

A second reading is still necessary before a new policy can be enacted, and an immediate date is not certain at this time, according to Canty, who is the board chairman.

Trustees have been split on the matter for at least six months with a group emphasizing students should be held accountable for their grades and the other side favoring offering more chances to students.

## 3. DISTRICT WILL MOVE TO ELECTRONIC PROCUREMENT WITH NEW YEAR

Sumter School District will go live with an electronic procurement process system with the start of the new school year.

District Chief Financial Officer Shatika Spearman confirmed to the school board's Finance Committee at the May 14 meeting the changeover will occur in cooperation with the district's financial management software system vendor Smartfusion.

The necessary infrastructure has been loaded electronically by the vendor, tests have been conducted, and training sessions have been scheduled for the summer for school principals, district bookkeepers, district directors, executive-level leadership and others, according to Spearman.

## 4. DISTRICT COMINGS AND GOINGS

Kathy Lyons is the new principal at High Hills Elementary School, replacing Mary Kay Norton. Lyons previously served as an assistant principal at Wilder Elementary School.

Will Howard is a new assistant principal at Sumter High School.

## Education

# A perfect fit

## Liberty teacher Michelle McDonald has 'amazing first year,' named state Public Charter School District Teacher of the Year

BY BRUCE MILLS  
bruce@theitem.com

Sometimes a dream can come true, and you do not have to move for it either.

That describes the story of Liberty STEAM Charter School third-grade lead teacher Michelle McDonald, who went from not knowing anything about the Sumter school one year ago to becoming the South Carolina Public Charter School District Teacher of the Year now.

A Lee County native and educator/administrator in her home county for 21 years with four advanced degrees in education to include a doctorate, McDonald said she felt last summer she was no longer making an impact on kids and was ready to leave the profession.

"I was at the point of stepping out of the door for something different, and in the process of looking for that something different, I came across Liberty," she said recently.

In looking at the school's website at the time, McDonald said she was impressed by the various enrichment opportunities offered to Liberty students, or "scholars" as the school refers to them.

They include visual arts, STEAM, physical education, music, various sports, chess, girls' and boys' empowerment classes, and the list goes on, she said.

Liberty offers two enrichment classes per day — as opposed to one in a traditional public school setting — and also opportunities after school and on the weekends.

"One of the things that stood out most to me about Liberty was their focus on the whole child," McDonald said. "It was not just words on paper, though, but there was evidence that they were doing other things like the

*I was at the point of stepping out of the door for something different, and in the process of looking for that something different, I came across Liberty.*

**MICHELLE MCDONALD**

S.C. Public Charter School District  
Teacher of the Year

enrichment opportunities and social and emotional learning lessons built into their curriculum."

Add to that a teaching fellow in each classroom with the lead teacher to allow for more small group instruction and differentiation to meet students where they were at, daily mentoring and other interventions, and seemingly every area where a child could lose out, Liberty had supports in place to prevent that.

"So, all those things that could stop a child from learning because they have other things going on, Liberty has something in place to address those needs," McDonald said. "Those structures were in place so that in the classroom, the teachers can really focus on teaching."

### THE FIRST YEAR

In her first year, McDonald was Liberty's overall network teacher of the year, and she also was named the South Carolina Public Charter School District Teacher of the Year. The district is the authorizer/sponsor for 39 charter schools in the state, including Liberty.



PHOTO PROVIDED

From left, Liberty STEAM Charter School Executive Director Trevor Ivey, South Carolina Public Charter School District Superintendent Chris Neeley, Liberty's Michelle McDonald and Liberty STEAM Elementary Academy Director Sally Harris stand after McDonald is announced as the state district's Teacher of the Year in May.

Based on the accomplishments, McDonald will be part of the state teacher of the year competition next school year.

McDonald described it as an "amazing first year" and also spoke highly of Liberty making expectations known to parents and their support from the home — another critical piece in student development and growth.

Teachers, staff and parents all feel valued as well, she added, and are surveyed throughout the year.

Overall, she described the change to Liberty as a new lease on her career and thinks she is "moving back into my purpose," she said.

She describes Liberty as the right fit for her at this time in her career with a culture that focuses on teamwork, support, respect and trust.

All that allows her to then meet her own personal expectations, which include a safe learning environment for students, where they are not afraid to take risks and make mistakes.

"I believe when you create that safe learning environment that is conducive to learning for all students and you

meet their needs where they are, then the growth and gains will come," McDonald said.

Liberty STEAM's Board of Directors has taken notice.

Director Jenny Knopf describes McDonald as a natural-born leader with an engaging presence that commands all.

"Dr. McDonald inspires greatness among our staff and has an excellent parent rapport," she said. "She is a perfect candidate for district teacher of the year, and we hope to see her go on for state."

After one year, Liberty leaders have also moved McDonald into the school's leader fellow program to assume a future leadership position.

Liberty Executive Director Trevor Ivey said McDonald is a relentless worker who continually strives to increase her effectiveness.

"I am a better educator having had the opportunity to lead and learn alongside her this school year," he said, "and we look forward to her stepping into an organization leadership role in the years to come."

## Religion

# Hands clenched tightly have little chance of succeeding

I recently had the privilege of attending the Mayor's Annual Prayer Breakfast. It was held at Alice Drive Baptist Church. I have served at churches in six different states and in 10 different cities, and every city I have served has a Mayor's Prayer Breakfast. This was by far the best one I have ever attended.



**Rev. Stewart Rawson**

churches were gathering to pray for the other Christians in the town or city. This prayer breakfast, the one here in Sumter, those invited to pray prayed for everyone! There was a prayer for teachers and a prayer for students; there was a prayer for the military and a prayer for church leaders; there was a prayer for medical professionals, and there was a prayer for first responders. As I said, we prayed for everyone.

As people of faith, we make bold claims like, "God created everything that exists." We cite from our scriptures that "everyone is created in God's image." Christians quote Jesus, and we remind ourselves Jesus commanded us to "love our neighbors as we love ourselves." When a community gathers to pray together it only seems right and fitting that we would pray for everyone. The words of those who prayed (and I was told that

every effort is made to not have ministers pray, which I actually love) lifted everyone in this community up to God.

A memorable moment in the prayer breakfast came when Dr. Mark Mitchiner, a respected pediatrician at Sumter Pediatrics, came forward to pray for medical professionals. Dr. Mitchiner made the observation before he prayed that right now in our world we are all walking around with our hands clenched tightly, a metaphor for him, as I understood it, that we are clinging so tightly to everything that we have and everything we believe that we are not open to God's guidance. Dr. Mitchiner observed that he is working hard to live with his hand opened, opened to the world, allowing God to guide us and lead us. I absolutely love these sentiments, and I told Dr. Mitchiner I was going to quote him.

There are so many pressing needs in our community: creating a safe place for our children to live and grow up, finding ways to make sure those in our community who are going hungry are fed and creating affordable housing for those who are on the margins. These kinds of challenges require that we come together and work together to improve our community. If our hands are clenched tightly, rather than being open to others, we will have little chance of succeeding. But, if we can reach across divides and sit down around tables together and greet each other with kindness, then the possibilities are limitless.

May God continue to guide us to become a more beloved community.

*Stewart Rawson is the pastor of First Presbyterian Church in Downtown Sumter.*



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## Government

### AGENDAS FROM PAGE A5

and others," according to public documents.

20. **\$1,000,000** toward a Central Carolina Technical College facility upgrade to the health center building
21. **\$1,500,000** toward Mayesville Main Street revitalization
22. **\$1,200,000** toward Pinewood Road paving
23. **\$9,500,000** toward a Dugan Street and downtown parking facility
24. **\$1,250,000** toward a Delaine Community Center. It would construct "a new community center for seniors and youth with approximately 4,000 sq. ft. to replace the current center located near the old Delaine School," according to public documents.
25. **\$3,000,000** toward the South Sumter Gym
26. **\$1,500,000** toward Harvin Street redesign and streetscape
27. **\$300,000** toward Pinewood sidewalks
28. **\$3,500,000** toward community sidewalks and activity paths

29. **\$1,000,000** toward airport facility upgrade
30. **\$2,500,000** toward community-wide acquisition of distressed structures

### CITY OF SUMTER RECEIVES MORE BLOCK GRANT FUNDING THAN EXPECTED

The City of Sumter has received an additional \$18,000 in community development block grant money than officials had budgeted for earlier this year.

When city officials started planning for this round of CDBG funding earlier this year, officials used the amount the city was allotted from HUD last year, which was about \$350,000, because the amount the city would receive for 2024-25 funding was not yet known.

CDBGs consist of federal funding from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development that comes in the form of grants that are to be used to improve neighborhoods and make them more livable for residents in low- to moderate-income areas.

Youth employment opportunities for low- to moderate-income areas and demolition of dilapidated structures

are among some of the most common activities these grants are used for, according to earlier reporting by *The Sumter Item*.

The federal government defines what the grants can be used for, not the municipalities that receive them.

The City of Sumter has an Entitlement Community status because it is a metropolitan statistical area, or an area with a relatively dense population. This is what qualifies the city to receive these block grants from HUD.

Public documents detail that the City of Sumter, for the 2024-25 fiscal year, received \$368,392 in CDBG funding.

City council shared the preliminary budget for 2024-25 CDBG spending with the public during the Feb. 20 city council meeting (before they knew they would end up receiving roughly \$18,000 more than during the 2023-24 fiscal year), and according to that draft, about \$70,000 might be allotted to administering the program, \$10,000 might go toward eliminating slum and blight, about \$25,000 might be allotted to Sumter United Ministries to provide minor home repairs for low-

to moderate-income residents, about \$193,000 might be allotted to housing repair for low- to moderate-income residents, \$2,500 might be allotted to YMCA youth services, \$46,500 might be allotted to youth employment, and \$3,000 might be allotted to the HYPE program, which provides after-school care.

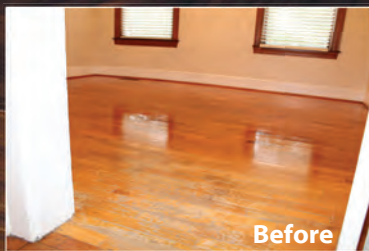
Again, this budget draft was based on the amount the city was allotted for the 2023-24 budget because city officials did not yet know how much they would be allotted for the 2024-25 budget, so they predicted it would be about the same as they were given for the 2023-24 budget, which was about \$350,000.

Now that city officials know they have \$368,392 allotted in CDBG funding, the budget is undergoing changes.

Here are the proposed changes:

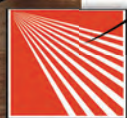
- The administration part of the budget has increased from \$70,017 to \$73,678.
- The housing repair section has been increased from \$173,168 to \$185,314.
- The youth employment section has increased from \$46,500 to \$49,000.

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**New 2024 Ford Edge SEL AWD**

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## New 2024 Ford Expedition Timberline 4WD

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## New 2023 Ford F-150 SuperCrew XLT 5'5" Box 4WD

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## New 2023 Ford F-150 Super-Crew XLT 5'5" Box 4WD



## New 2023 Ford Mustang Mach-E Premium AWD

**0%** APR financing for up to 72 months<sup>1</sup> **or** **\$498** per mo for 39 mos **\$8,200** due at signing<sup>2</sup>

Artwork for representational purposes only. Stk# 231240. VIN 3FMTK3SU4PM22076. (1) Financing available on Tier 1+ - Tier 1 credit approval. 0% APR, \$0 down payment, and 72 monthly payments of \$13.89 per \$1,000 borrowed. Must finance through Ford Credit. In lieu of other offers. (2) Lease for \$498 per month for 39 months, 7500 miles per year, \$0.15 per mile over. \$8,200 due at signing includes \$1,702 down payment. Includes \$1,200 Lease Cash. \$0 security deposit. Tax, title, and license fees excluded in due at signing. Available to qualified customers on approved credit. See dealer for full details. Dealer not responsible for typographical or numerical errors. Expires 06/30/2024.

**0%** APR financing for up to 72 months<sup>1</sup> **or** **Save up to \$2,535** off MSRP<sup>2</sup>

Artwork for representational purposes only. Stk# 231240. VIN 3FMTK3SU4PM22076. MSRP \$50,935. (1) Financing available on Tier 1+ - Tier 1 credit approval. 0% APR, \$0 down payment, and 72 monthly payments of \$13.89 per \$1,000 borrowed. Must finance through Ford Credit. In lieu of other offers. (2) Includes \$2,535 Dealer Incentive. Tax, title, license fees excluded. Available to qualified customers with approved credit. See dealer for full details. Dealer not responsible for typographical or numerical errors. Expires 06/30/2024.

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## Arts and entertainment

# American Double Dutch League brings national talent to Sumter

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE

alaysha@theitem.com

The American Double Dutch League hosted its 51st Invitational World Double Dutch Competition this June, bringing teams from across the country back to league headquarters in Sumter.

Originating in the 1930s in New York, double Dutch gained structure and competitive recognition with the help of NYPD officer David A. Walker. Sumterite Rose Ford, inspired by the double Dutch scene in Harlem, spearheaded its spread to Sumter by establishing it locally at the Sumter County Parks and Recreation Department.

In 2001, after the 9/11 attacks, directors of the American Double Dutch League were looking to move the sports headquarters from New York,

and Rose seized the opportunity to bring it home. With headquarters now in Sumter, the national league also sported new faces in its leadership roles, including Rose's daughter, Loria Ford, as league president and Rosalind Boone as judge, her granddaughters, Tameisha Lloyd, newly appointed league state representative, and Taneisha Goodman, scorekeeper and manager of documents, and her great-grandsons Se'Veon Boone, My'lik Llyod, Keondre and Caleb Benjamin as counters and timekeepers.

Despite the decline of the sport's popularity, for 51 years, the Ford family has hosted teams from across the nation — New York, New Jersey, Ohio, Connecticut and Massachusetts, just to name a few; teams from Japan, China and surrounding countries once traveled to Sumter to show off their talents but have been absent from the last few competitions.

But despite the overall notion that the sport has lost its luster, there are teams, right here in South Carolina,



ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

Lacie Doolittle, third from right, stands with Epoch Girls Squad winners who won first place in the fifth-grade singles division at the 51st Invitational World Double Dutch Championship on Saturday, June 8, at Sumter County Civic Center.

that beg to differ.

"This is my ministry. My purpose is to get out and train the kids because they're our future. That's our next generation, so they have a lot of potential," said Lacie Doolittle, founder and

head coach of Epoch Girls Squad from Wagener, about double Dutch.

Doolittle established the team in summer 2022. As a 501C-3 nonprofit,

SEE **JUMPING**, PAGE A17



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

A team competes in the 51st Invitational World Double Dutch Championship at Sumter County Civic Center on Saturday, June 8.

## 51st Invitational World Double Dutch Championship: By the numbers

**12,020**

Total jumps of all teams

**316**

Highest number of jumps from a single team – Just Us of New Jersey

**32**

Teams, divided by grade level

**8**

States represented



# JUMPING

 FROM PAGE A16

Girls Squad offers young girls ages 6-16 the opportunity to jump free of charge; fundraisers and sponsorships are how the team supports itself at competitions and regular operations. As a child, she jumped for years, taught by her elementary school teacher, the late Joy Holman. After being “blessed with a little girl,” Doolittle decided to start the team to fill the lives of young girls, including her daughter, with the joy the sport brought her.

Doolittle takes pride that her Christian team regularly attends church, is able to recite Bible verses, and the majority have been baptized.

Competing in the Invitational World Double Dutch Competition for the first time in 2023, the team placed first in every category, inspiring a new category called the Triple Crown. Back then, Doolittle only had four jumpers on her squad. This year, she returned with 19.

Though the group only placed first in the fifth-grade singles division with 284 jumps and a team score of 508.75, the fourth-highest score on June 8, they earned their speed badges, which are given to jumpers who surpass the number of jumps from competing teams within their grade level. A trip to Sumter is always a highlight of their year, as they get to show off their year of hard work.

At the recent competition, hosted at Sumter County Civic Center on June 6-8, Doolittle and her squad mixed and mingled with teams, sharing tips on how to improve and laughter at each other's blunders. When the time came to crown a winner, tears were shed — as to be expected after all their hard work — but hugs were also shared as they congratulated the success of their competitors.

The proof was in the jumping on how much of an impact double Dutch has on teams. And by the faces of the Ford family, the laughter, hugs and applause they shared with jumpers and coaches, it's apparent the impact the sport still has on them as well.

The league also invited various Sumter-based food vendors to share their Southern hospitality and dishes that national teams may not know of. Empty hands were hard to spot as they were filled with goodies from boiled peanuts to decadent desserts to savory barbecue dishes and cultural cuisine. Though an official total of sales for these vendors was not available, given the hundreds of locals and visitors who shuffled throughout the venue during the three-day competition, one could assume it was hefty.

The Ford family wants to continue its spread of double Dutch throughout the state and across the country, hoping to one day see diversity and inclusivity flood the local venue like it once did.



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Friends, family and teammates cheer on participants at the 51st Invitational World Double Dutch Championship on Saturday, June 8, at Sumter County Civic Center.



## Military

# Shaw's Col. Edmondson reflects on 20-plus years of service on Women's Armed Services Integration Act anniversary

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE  
alaysha@theitem.com

On June 12, 1948, President Harry S. Truman signed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act into law, marking a historic moment in United States military history. This legislation officially allowed women to serve as permanent members of the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and, at the time, newly established Air Force. This act was a pivotal step forward toward gender equality in the military. It laid a foundation for countless women to make their mark in ways previously unimaginable, fostering a legacy of service, leadership and sacrifice that inspired generations.

Recruitment initially was slow. In June 1950, only 3,200 women were on active duty. In 2022, the U.S. Depart-

ment of Defense reported 228,966 active-duty women in the armed forces.

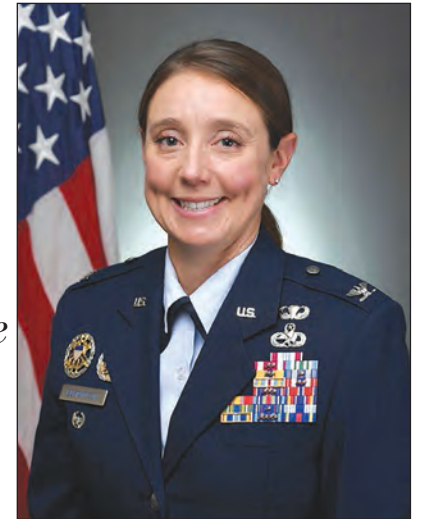
Seventy-six years after the signing of the act, its impact is reflected vividly in the bravery and commitment of women at Shaw Air Force Base — like Col. Angela Edmondson. Graciously fulfilling her roles as a mother to a son, 11, and daughter, 8, as well as a wife, she also serves as commander of the 20th Maintenance Group at Shaw. Her decades-long journey in the Air Force is filled with opportunities to learn more about herself, her country and how essential her service is, locally and nationally, from assignments to South Korea, Japan and across the United States to earning the Legion of Merit and Defense Meritorious Service Medal, among many other awards.

SEE EDMONDSON, PAGE A19

*'I think women have always been capable of doing things, and we've progressed as a society and as a department. The smartest thing we can do is to allow the most capable people to do the jobs that we need them to do.'*

**COL. ANGELA EDMONDSON**

Commander of 20th Maintenance Group at Shaw Air Force Base









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## EDMONDSON

FROM PAGE A18

Hailing from Altoona, a small town in south-central Pennsylvania, Edmondson grew up with the desire to serve, although she didn't quite know what that entailed at the time. Watching old World War II movies with her dad played a significant role in shaping her desire. However, a pivotal moment for her came in 1993, when the Air Force lifted the prohibition on women serving as combat aviators. At age 13, young Edmondson realized the potential path available to her, and she was determined to pursue it.

Practical aspects, such as financial support for education, also influenced her decision, and 26 years ago this June, she started her journey at the Air Force Academy and, according to Edmondson, it was the best decision she ever made.

Like every decision we make, there are bound to be challenges. Many of Edmondson's challenges were not specific to her gender. The demands of leading airmen, managing resources and making critical decisions would be a challenge for any military officer.

However, she acknowledges the unique challenges associated with being a woman in the service from balancing a dual-military household — her husband recently retiring from the Air Force — to navigating pregnancy and motherhood while active duty.

"When I was pregnant, there were places, things that I couldn't do in my job because they were dangerous for my baby," she said. "It was more personally challenging for me because I wanted to be where my airmen were, and I think I overcame that challenge by recognizing that there are some boundaries around what I can do; that just means I need to invest heavily in those other areas. Rather than look at what can't I do, focus on what could I do?"

This shift in mindset and push toward determination led to various fulfilling moments. Alongside the Air Force providing her the opportunity to travel and pursue an education — earning her bachelor's degree and

multiple graduate degrees — she also gained experience in leadership. The chance to lead a diverse group of airmen — though it didn't seem so in the beginning — was an opportunity unlike any other.

"To lead the largest group on base, somewhere between 1,800 to 2,000 people, I think there are definitely days where I sit down and pinch myself and say, 'I can't believe they actually let me do this,'" Edmondson expressed, heartfelt emotions settling in her words. "I think women have always been capable of doing things, and we've pro-

gressed as a society and as a department. The smartest thing we can do is to allow the most capable people to do the jobs that we need them to do. I think that that opportunity to meet my potential, regardless of what my agenda is, is the opportunity that I am most grateful for."

There have been many women, in all capacities, who have paved a way for Edmondson to do what she has, is and will continue to do throughout her career.

Her determination to show up for her crew and herself day in and day out will hopefully have the same impact on the next generation of armed service members as it had on her, from single mothers to new divorcees to blissfully single women and many more.

"Leading is not about being in charge; leading is about influence. It doesn't matter what rank you hold ... you have the power to influence [those] around you and the environment around you," Edmondson said. "I think that's the message I'd like to leave with young women is that you don't give up that power to anyone else; you have the power to make it better."



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## JUNE 11 REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY RESULTS

Here are the results of the local general Republican and Democratic primary held Tuesday, June 11. To find results from the two races that went to runoffs June 25, go to [www.theitem.com/election2024](http://www.theitem.com/election2024). Election coverage is available to read without a subscription. For those reading this before or on June 25, polls are open 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. for voters who live in those districts.

### U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 6 REPUBLICAN

**Duke Buckner:** 55.76%, 10,145 votes – nominee  
**Justin Scott:** 44.24%, 8,050 votes

### STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 35 DEMOCRATIC

**Austin B. Floyd Jr.:** 37.76%, 1,941 votes – runoff  
**Jeffrey R. Graham:** 46.99%, 2,416 votes – runoff  
**Lucy Mahon:** 15.25%, 784 votes

### STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 35 REPUBLICAN

**Lindsay Agostini:** 30.36%, 1,189 votes – runoff  
**Christina Allard:** 16.6%, 650 votes  
**Jerry Chivers:** 3.52%, 138 votes  
**Mike Jones:** 49.51%, 1,939 votes – runoff

### STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 36 DEMOCRATIC

**Eleazer Leazer Carter:** 22.48%, 1,689 votes  
**Kevin L. Johnson:** 77.52%, 5,824 votes – nominee

### STATE SENATE, DISTRICT 36 REPUBLICAN

**Leon Winn:** 21.69%, 850 votes  
**Jeff Zell:** 78.31%, 3,068 – nominee

### STATE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, DISTRICT 64 DEMOCRATIC

**Quadri Bell:** 81.53%, 2,322 votes – nominee  
**Arthur Moyd:** 18.47%, 526 votes

### SUMTER COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 7 DEMOCRATIC

**Tasha Gardner-Greene:** 50.77%, 298 votes – nominee  
**Gloria J. Lee:** 49.23%, 289 votes

### CLARENDON COUNTY COUNCIL, CHAIR REPUBLICAN

**LaNette Samuels Cooper:** 11.69%, 210 votes  
**Jay Johnson:** 88.31%, 1,587 votes – nominee

### CLARENDON COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 2 REPUBLICAN

**Jose A. Calvo:** 44.7%, 333 votes  
**Kurtis Rodine:** 55.3%, 412 votes – nominee

### LEE COUNTY COUNCIL, DISTRICT 5 DEMOCRATIC

**Jacqueline Josey:** 62.58%, 204 votes – nominee  
**Kimberly King:** 37.42%, 122 votes

### LEE COUNTY SCHOOL BOARD, DISTRICT 1 DEMOCRATIC

**Mattie Moses Mack:** 62.82%, 98 votes – nominee  
**Kelvin Wilson:** 37.18%, 58 votes



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Voters cast ballots during the June 2024 South Carolina state primary on Tuesday, June 11.



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Refreshments

# There's more to Kona Ice than you think



BY SARAH SONNTAG

That familiar jingle of the highly anticipated ice cream truck on a summer afternoon ignites a feeling of excitement quite like no other. And while it's not exactly ice cream, Kona Ice strives to create similar memories one shaved ice at a time.

Daniel Palumbo is the franchise owner and manager of Kona Ice in Sumter and West Columbia and a retired Air Force security officer and recruiter, the position that brought him to Sumter. He opened the local franchise in 2018 after seeing its success and impact in Hawaii, where he was previously stationed. Today, the business is operating with three trucks and a kiosk. Its business hours are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Sunday.

Palumbo shared information about the franchise that people might want to know when thinking about where to get their next summer sweet treat.

**THEY GIVE BACK**

The business offers discounts to nonprofits, and when catering events for schools, they donate roughly 25-30% of that profit back to the school's PTO. Palumbo explained, "I don't really broadcast or make it public because [giving back to the community] just makes me feel good."

**IT IS NOT JUST FOR KIDS**

While most people assume the colorful trucks and merry music attract only kids, according to Palumbo, about 40% of customers are actually adults. In fact, the truck offers mocktail flavors with its adult consumers in mind, such as lavender lemonade mai tai and Caribbean cherry. It also offers sugar-free options for those looking for a healthier treat.

**THERE ARE NEW SUMMER SPECIALS**

The truck offers special flavors only available during certain seasons, and this year it is bringing some old and new flavors to summer. Returning is rocket pop, a favorite flavor from last summer, and three new flavors coming include tropical twist, peach-mango lemonade and star fruit.

**THEY HAVE A NEW TOPPING**

Scientists working for Kona Ice have cooked up a new sour candy topping, according to Palumbo. The sour powder is sprinkled on top of the ice then hardens into candy.

To book a Kona truck, visit [www.kona-ice.com/find-a-kona/](http://www.kona-ice.com/find-a-kona/).



SARAH SONNTAG / THE SUMTER ITEM

Kona Ice sells its icy treats at the Gamecock City Farmers Market on June 8.

## Looking for more sweet options?

- Pelican's SnoBalls, 2024 Best of Sumter winner for Best Sno Cones/ Shaved Ice, is at 471 N. Guignard Drive. Business hours are noon to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 9 p.m. on Sunday.
- Baskin-Robbins is at 1106 Broad St. Business hours are 11 a.m. to 10 p.m. Monday through Sunday.
- SweetFrog Premium Frozen Yogurt is at 1273 Broad St. Its business hours are noon to 8:30 p.m. Monday through Thursday, noon to 9:30 p.m. on Friday, 11 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. on Saturday and 11 a.m. to 8:30 p.m. on Sunday.
- TCBY is at 2000 W. Liberty St. inside Kangaroo Gas station. Its business hours are 11 a.m. to 9 p.m. Monday through Saturday and 1 to 9 p.m. on Sunday.

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# the Sumter ITEM



## Entertainment

# From Sumter's Fourth Friday concerts to Lee County's Lizard Man Stomp, there is plenty to do locally and just a short drive away

## SUMTER COUNTY

Splash around at the **Sumter Aquatics Center**. The center offers classes and activities and a free water aerobics class. You can also rent the center for parties, which includes use of the new lazy river. Usual admission for all guests is \$3, and hours throughout the summer are: Mondays: closed; Tuesday: noon-5 p.m.; Wednesday: noon-5 p.m.; Thursday: noon-5 p.m.; Friday: noon-7 p.m.; Saturday: noon-5 p.m.; and Sunday: 1-6 p.m.

**Gamecock City Farmers Market** is now open from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturdays outside Central Carolina Technical College's Advanced Manufacturing Technology Training Center, 853 Broad St. The market will continue to add vendors so that there is a little bit of something for everybody, from fresh fruits and vegetables to handmade jewelry. The official grand opening of the market is Saturday, July 6. The grand opening will include its regularly scheduled vendors as well as dancing, raffles, face painting, performers and more.

**Sumter Farmers Market** is up and running from noon to 5 p.m. Fridays through Nov. 22 at USC Sumter, 200 Miller Road. Grab some lunch at one of the many food trucks and purchase quality, farm-fresh products and unique hand-crafted items all at the market. SFMNP-Senior and WIC vouchers are accepted.

**Fourth Fridays** has started back up for



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTO

Visitors meet the Lizard Man during a previous Lizard Man Stomp event in Bishopville. See information on this year's event on A23.

the summer in front of Sumter County Courthouse, 141 N. Main St. Every fourth Friday through September, a different band will take the stage at 6:30 p.m., and the event will last until 9 p.m. with food trucks/vendors, beer and free entertainment. Palmetto Optimist Club will give out free books to kids and have popcorn for sale, and Sertoma Club will sell the beer. Downtown restaurants will also be open during the event. Bands on the schedule are The Live in the Flesh

Experience on June 28, Chief Complaint on July 26, Second Nature on Aug. 23 and Too Much Sylvia on Sept. 27. Bring your own chairs. Coolers aren't allowed.

The Sumter Opera House, 21 N. Main St., is bringing back its **Summer Movie Series** featuring \$2 showings and popcorn and water for just \$1. The lineup is as follows: June 25, "Wish"; July 2, "Paw Patrol"; July 9, "Under the Boardwalk"; July 16, "Puppet Treasure Island" (1996); July 23, "The Super Mario Bros. Movie";



and July 30, "Ratatouille." Movie times are 10 a.m., 1 p.m. and 7 p.m. For additional information, visit [SumterOperaHouse.com](http://SumterOperaHouse.com).

Sumter Original Brewery invites the community to "**fill the brewery with comics and vintage toys**" on Saturday, July 27, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Comic Sanctum LLC is hosting the event at 2 S. Main St.

Jeep lovers, their friends and family will all come together at the third-annual **Krawlin' for Christ Jeep Show and Shine** on Saturday, July 27, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Sumter County Civic Center, 700 W. Liberty St. There will be Jeep vendors, live music, food vendors, an RC course and the Show and Shine Competition. The indoor/outdoor event is free and open to the public and supports St. Jude Children's Hospital. To be a vendor or for more information, please contact Minnie Sue Ardis or Ashley Ardis at [krawlinforchrist@sc.rr.com](mailto:krawlinforchrist@sc.rr.com). Learn more about the event at <https://krawlinforchrist.wixsite.com/my-site-1>.

SEE EVENTS, PAGE A23

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## EVENTS FROM PAGE A22



## CLARENDON COUNTY

The City of Manning will hold its **Red, White and Blue Celebration** from 6:30 to 11 p.m. Wednesday, July 3, at the Farmers Market, 21 E. Boyce St. There will be music, food and of course a fireworks display. Bring a chair and sit for a while.

## LEE COUNTY

Look for the Lizard Man and celebrate a local legend at the **third-annual Lizard Man Stomp** event in Bishopville on Saturday, June 29, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. On June 29, 1988, a lizard man, standing 8 feet tall, was allegedly spotted walking in Bishopville's Scape Ore Swamp near Browntown Road, and locals have been fascinated with the legend ever since. There will be a parade, music, arts, crafts, car show and free food for the kids in downtown Bishopville.

**The Lizard Man Stomp 2024 Arts and Crafts Show** will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 29, at the S.C. Cotton Museum, 121 W. Cedar Lane, Bishopville. Free admission. Vendors can contact Millie Scott at (803) 486-5093.

## COLUMBIA

View the power and performance of powerboats from across the country at the **Dam Boat Run at Lake Murray** on June 21-23. The event benefits the Big

Red Barn Retreat and the Richland County Sheriff's Department. For additional information or to register to be in the boat run, visit [www.lakemurraypowerboatrun.com](http://www.lakemurraypowerboatrun.com).

See **S.C.'s Largest Fireworks Show** synchronized to music on Lake Murray on Saturday, June 29. Fireworks will be launched at about 9:30 p.m. from both Spence Island and Dreher Island. The best viewing location is from a boat. Tune your radio to hear patriotic music while enjoying the view. The best way to watch/listen is to tune your radio to 93.1 If you choose to stream the music there will be a delay. The fireworks are funded through Capital City/Lake Murray Country's fundraising efforts at the Taste of Lake Murray each year, private donations and support from sponsors. The Annual Patriotic Boat Parade on Lake Murray will not take place this year due to the construction at the dam. All normal fees will apply at the park sites, all boat launching sites and Marinas on Lake Murray. Should thunder and lightning occur and cause a postponement, the fireworks will take place on Sunday, June 30.

**The Lexington County Peach Festival** complete with fireworks will be held Monday, July 4, at the Gilbert Community Park in Gilbert. The schedule of events is: 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m., car show; 9 a.m.-5 p.m., arts and crafts vendors; 9:30 a.m., peach parade; noon-9 p.m., live entertainment; and fireworks at 9:15 p.m. Visit [lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com](http://lexingtoncountypeachfestival.com) for more information.

**The South Carolina Book Lovers Expo and Food Truck Festival** will be held Saturday, July 27, at the Gala Event Center, 1801 Bush River Road,

from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. You can meet 40 regional authors representing many genres, get writing coaching, get books signed and take your pick of food from among five food trucks. Children are welcome at the event and will be able to explore the newest books, get their faces painted, take part in storytelling and more. The event is free and open to the public. Learn more at [www.thebookbutler.com/events](http://www.thebookbutler.com/events).

**The Sustainable Midlands Palmetto Tasty Tomato Festival** will be held 11 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, July 20, at The Robert Mills House at Hampton-Preston Mansion & Gardens, Columbia. Live music will be performed by Reedy River String Band, Swamptooth and Michael Haney Music. There will South Carolina artists and apparel vendors, food trucks, kids activities, silent auction and of course - lots of different kinds of tomato tastings, contests and competitions.



## FLORENCE COUNTY

**The Third Annual Watermelon Crawl** will be held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, June 22, at 5255 Langston Road, Timmonsville.

The free family friendly event will include food trucks, 40 local vendors and fun for the entire family.

Join Dooley Planetarium, 200



Alumni Drive, Florence, on Sunday, June 23, for the **Evening Skies of Summer**. This free public planetarium program will provide an overview of the night sky for June and July and showcase constellations, planets and various deep sky objects that are visible this time of year. The program begins at 3 p.m. Doors open at 2:30 p.m. for visitors to explore the planetarium. Seating is first come, first served.

## KERSHAW COUNTY

Kids, show your patriotic pride at the **8th-Annual Kids' 4th of July Parade** on Saturday, June 29, starting at 10:30 a.m. at Camden City Hall.

The festivities begin a half hour earlier at 10 a.m. and will include Camden police and fire departments, Hobkirk Hill Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Revolutionary War Visitor Center and more. Decorate your scooter, bicycle or wagon for the holiday and wear your best red, white and blue. The event is free, and there will also be free snow cones after the parade. Motorized vehicles (electric or gas powered) are not allowed, and children 10 and under must be escorted by an adult.

Get ready for **Jammin' in July at Historic Camden** on Saturday, July 13, starting at 5 p.m. The music starts then with bands including Landslide, Rusty Davis Group, Jim Hayes, Fair Jam, Ten Cent Rich, Melton Moon and Blake Weinbach. The event will be held rain or shine, and drinks, cocktails and food will be available to buy. Bring your own blanket and lawn chairs. Doors open at 4 p.m. at Historic Camden Revolutionary War Site, 222 Broad St., Camden. All ages are invited to come. Buy your tickets at Davis and Son's Guitar Shop or [jamminincamden.com](http://jamminincamden.com).

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## Entertainment

## '24' is landmark, brilliant series that transformed TV shows

Summer of 2010 was an interesting point of discovering the unique elements of the innovative television experience. For years, cinema has been the dominating force within our entertainment spectrum. What emerged from the innovative medium evolved from inventive minds involving directors, writers, producers and technological advances to continue its evolution in providing escapism.



A REVIEW BY  
ISAIAH RIDLEY

It was not long until television became the "new cinema" for audiences watching from the comfort of their home. Prominent actors began appearing consistently in series, adding necessary star power in capturing the attention of viewers. It is interesting to note how certain shows found ways to conceptualize themes in a shorter amount of runtime whereas the cinematic medium had to gradually build up to specific revelations of intense excitement.

"24" was the first series I actively became emotionally engaged with during the summer of 2010. My earliest recollections of the show came more out of curiosity than actual interest quite honestly. I remember reading different discussions about revealing plot points, behind-the-scenes information and quotes from prominent characters. After arriving at the conclusion of whether to watch the series, I began my journey into the espionage world of government agencies, foreign adversaries, political and corporate corruption, terrorism and foreign disputes. The series' concept offered the experience of real-time presentation. It also brought about displaying split-screen viewings in four panels as a way of showing other revelations occurring at the same time.

Kiefer Sutherland portrays government agent Jack Bauer as part of the Counter Terrorist Unit. The character development of Jack explores his capability as a federal agent in the field, utilizing extreme methods to protect America. His approach in combating enemies both foreign and domestic brought debates about whether the use of torture is an acceptable and humane tool in extracting information. Bauer's 24-hour day as the events occur in real time involves averting threats associated with political assassinations, nuclear holocaust threats, biochemical warfare, sleeper cell terrorist units embedded in government structures and political corruption with all the powers of the government creating high-stakes consequences.

Jack is not the only interesting character in these intense stories either. There is an assortment of allies, for example, Tony Almeida, Chloe O'Brian, Michelle Dessler, Bill Buchanan and myriad important political figures aiding him in his quest to bring stability to the country. Every season rides on the momentum of the next, revealing shocking betrayals, sinister motivations from surprise characters, unexpected tragedies and real-life implications that paint a relevant picture of the landscape in our era. I have always viewed Bauer as a tragic anti-hero despite the approach of his questionable tactics. Audiences see a man driven by the foundations of his patriotism with his line of work bringing tragedy into his existence. Each season is a deeper exploration into the emotional aspect of the viewer praying and hoping Jack finally receives a happy conclusion.

"24's" masterful quality is centered on the realistic depiction of intense, emotional, gripping acting and intricate, detailed dialogue between the respective characters, creating an urgent need to experience the next episode. For a small-screen presentation, its action sequences provide high-octane action showcasing the ability to grip the audience with powerful ease



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Kiefer Sutherland portrays government agent Jack Bauer as part of the Counter Terrorist Unit on "24."

without releasing its grasp.

Viewers could examine themes within the "24" spectrum as elaborate, exciting depictions of conspiracy theories. I would even venture to agree with their assessments to a certain extent. I embrace stories that challenge my perception, allowing me to think outside of the box in terms of potential possibilities of art, painting a canvas of events, discussions or theories transforming the fabric of our reality. "24" succeeds at challenging the audience in questioning their moral compass, asking, "What would you do if said crisis happened in America?"

While I have enjoyed every season of this marvelous show with the sixth being the weakest, my personal favorites are the fifth, seventh and eighth seasons for their intense exploration within the "24" universe and its characters. The fifth season is the show at its absolute peak from beginning to end with no filler whatsoever. I still remember going on a binge session of

the fifth season, completing it in two days. My emotional investment with the series was enthusiastic to the point of friends believing it was an obsession. I dedicated the entire summer of 2010 to watching every season of "24," including its television film titled "Redemption," which bridged the time gap between the sixth and seventh seasons, finding Jack working as a missionary in Africa.

Whenever a person asks for show recommendations, "24" is the show I always mention first. Kiefer Sutherland made the show special and realistic with his excellent acting and dedicated passion for nine seasons. My sincere hope is those who have not watched the series find their way into discovering its brilliance, even reaching out to me with their thoughts of its relentless and intense story structure. It is a landmark series that clearly innovated television by transforming it into a theater experience in a home setting.



# From roots to renaissance: Manning Avenue Free Art Studio will expand in South Sumter

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE

alaysha@theitem.com

The sunny afternoon of Friday, May 31, marked the beginning of a new chapter for the arts in South Sumter.

Folks from across the county gathered at the Manning Avenue Free Art Studio for a groundbreaking ceremony to celebrate the expansion of the historic venue. This expansion is set to transform an already vital community hub into an even more significant site for creativity and support.

Ivan Sanders, executive director of the studio board and dedicated community leader, is leading the expansion of the studio, founded by his father, the late David "Pablo" Sanders. It opened in 1976, and the elder Sanders worked with youth in the neighborhood, teaching pottery, welding and various visual arts. The studio also served as one of the first Feed-A-Child program locations in the area, offering a safe haven and place for artistic expression.

The young Sanders remembered the days he and his brother would study art alongside other local kids. He watched as his father became a father figure to those who lacked one in their homes, teaching them how to play chess and be upstanding citizens. The kids, who often gave the Sanders brothers a hard time like real siblings, loved and cared for the elder as if he were one of their own.

It was that giving and receiving of love — for one another and for the arts — that sparked Ivan's desire to continue his father's legacy. He has gathered significant community members to serve on the studio board and local and state officials, such as Sumter Mayor



ZAC HOOKS / THE SUMTER ITEM

Ivan Sanders, right, attends the groundbreaking for the expansion of the Manning Avenue Free Art Studio on May 31. The studio was founded by his father, David "Pablo" Sanders, a local artist and sculptor.

David Merchant, South Carolina Rep. David Weeks, Sen. Thomas McElveen and S.C. House Speaker Murrell Smith, to foster a new look but savor that same feel of the beloved studio.

The expansion will include a new 8,000-square-foot building in the lot next to the current studio, made possible by federal funding, and will house four primary therapies: music engagement, visual arts therapy, progressive writing and creative movement.

"Art is such a creative way to help people. It can even cure chronic diseases," Sanders said. "I think that's missing in society today, especially to some of these kids who have no knowledge of art. I think we got a couple of artists over here that a lot of people don't know about."

Deloris Williams couldn't agree more. A grant writer and board member of the studio, Williams has played a crucial



ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

SEE **STUDIO**, PAGE A26

## STUDIO FROM PAGE A25

role in securing funding for the expansion — crediting Weeks for all his support in moving this project and his community impact forward. She emphasized the broader impact the studio expansion will have on South Sumter, calling the new structure a “magnet for the arts.”

“I think it’s going to bring people across that bridge over to Manning Avenue. One of the greatest impacts that it is going to have will be on preparing young people,” Williams said. “We’re giving young people some skills — young people across the spectrum, but especially young people who may need additional employment. We will have print making, screen making in there. They will be able to learn how to frame, they will be able to learn all aspects of the arts in that building.”

The new building’s design, although modern, will blend seamlessly with the eclectic mix of structures along the avenue. Deloris said while architecture is contemporary, it respects the historical significance of the area.

“It’s very, very rare that you find an arts organization like this that’s going up in what has been an economically depressed area,” Williams said. Both she and Sand-



Renderings of the new studio were on display.

ers are excited about the potential for the studio to foster community and creativity. The duo, their fellow board members and community leaders can hardly wait, as Sanders said, “As soon as we start tearing down, we’re going to start building up.”

Sanders said the timeline, from clearing off the adjacent lot to opening those grand doors, is seven months.



PHOTOS BY ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

Mayor Pro Tem Rev. James Blassingame gives his remarks ahead of the groundbreaking on May 31. Community members, government officials and studio board members gathered for the event in South Sumter.

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## Learning and the brain

# The good life will not be televised



**Brent Kaneft**

a “1,000 songs in their pocket” overnight.

I was working at a wilderness therapy camp in Old Fort, North Carolina, and led at-risk youth into the woods for weeks

at a time, teaching them survival skills along the trail; it wouldn't have been too difficult to guess what I thought about all these innovations. I was a committed “Luddite,” a rejector of most new technology — I was also an English major who was fascinated by “Fahrenheit 451,” “Brave New World” and “1984.”

I felt confident that technological advancement meant the eventual enslavement of humanity, for many reasons, but none so obvious as the one Aldous Huxley highlighted: “man’s almost infinite appetite for distractions.” It’s hard to argue against him when you look around, in nearly every context, and see how glued we all are to

our phones.

Oddly enough, we know it’s a problem, we chastise ourselves — like smokers of old, we will quit on Monday, but time and again, we return to our screens. If, like neuroscientist and philosopher Iain McGilchrist argues, “attention is a moral act,” then we are potentially one of the most immoral generations in the history of humankind, given that the bulk of our screen-time attention is monopolized by trivialities, trash and terror that mislead, polarize and destroy. That is not a judgment about people. It’s a judgment about our nature — I’ve written before, we have a “negativity bias” built into our brains, which was necessary, but is now exploited by incredibly powerful companies in Silicon Valley. Our attention is what they crave, it is what makes them money, and our attention is held longer by negativity.

But “[i]nstead of assuming technology is either good or bad by definition,” like ol’ Moonbeam was doing, “technology should be understood as intrinsically value-laden and value-creating.

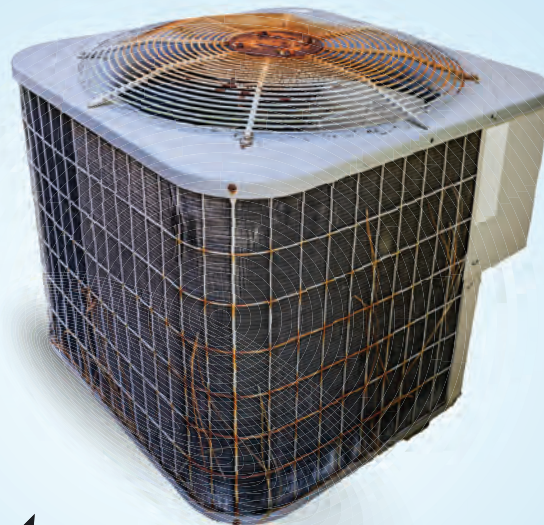
All technologies are created with the actualization of certain values as a goal; they are embedded with values from the start,” argues social philosopher Daniel Schmachtenberger. Our behaviors and values, in other words, are shaped by the technologies we use. So we need to be intentional about what technologies we integrate into our (and our children’s) lives.

Schmachtenberger’s insight is perhaps why research on the effect of computers and internet technologies on learning has been so deflating to those techno-apologists who believe, wrongly to this point, that these innovations would completely disrupt how we teach and dramatically improve student performance (mainly because it would increase engagement ... but teachers know, you can be engaged and not learn). Unfortunately, the research reveals that either a.) computers do not improve student performance, and with excessive use, can impede student learning or b.) neutral (“computers do not harm learning” or

SEE **LEARNING**, PAGE A28

# TIME TO MOVE ON

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# LEARNING

FROM PAGE A27

“they have the same impact as traditional teaching methods”). The advent of sophisticated artificial intelligence (AI) seems poised to change this history of technological failure in schools, but it’s unclear, for one reason mainly, in my opinion.

As neuroscientist and educator Dr. Jared Horvath argues, “the primary function of a tool is largely dictated by how individuals most often utilize the tool [...] This is why, when using a computer for homework, students typically last less than six minutes before accessing social media, messaging friends and engaging with other digital distractions.” Students could use their laptops and smartphones for deep, rigorous learning, but they often don’t, because the primary use of these tools is for entertainment. (i.e., A hammer has many uses, but mainly, you nail things.)

That is the value pre-embedded in these technologies. The technologies implicitly and explicitly declare, “Attention is something we give to what is immediately gratifying. What is not immediately gratifying does not de-

*‘The good life will not be televised ... or recorded on our iPhones. ... There is not an app for the good life — not yet at least.’*

serve our attention.”

Physical books, as another example, are also a technology. What values come embedded in books? Books demand sustained attention, delayed gratification, critical thinking and time. They are often cognitively challenging; they require energy and effort and create lasting joy, all the attributes we want for our students. But who has time to read these days?

Busyness, anxiety, distraction, paranoia, stress, suicidal ideation and



alienation: These are the attributes that are increasing in the younger generation. Is that because we are trying to “compute” the “non-computable”? Is that because we are monopolizing our time with technologies — tech that feeds itself on the worst in us — all in the hope that we’ll achieve happiness from the same tools that devalue joy, contentedness and higher laws because that’s a losing market strategy?

In “Amusing Ourselves to Death” (1985), Neil Postman predicted, “years

from now [...] it will be noticed that the massive collection and speed-of-light retrieval of data have been of great value to large-scale organizations but have solved very little of importance to most people and have created at least as many problems for them as they may have solved.”

The good life will not be televised ... or recorded on our iPhones. The good life is free, requires nothing extra. It is non-computable. We must, though, re-tune our attention to what sustains a good life: authentic joy that emerges from positive relationships, from living a purpose-driven life, from helping and serving others and from being absolutely and completely present in our lives (which is an incredible challenge). There is not an app for the good life — not yet at least. There is only you looking into the face of the cashier at the grocery checkout and having a real exchange of goodwill; you pausing to listen to your child’s meandering, ridiculous stories; you pausing when you feel the twitch to distract yourself by mindlessly scrolling; you choosing the technologies that promote the values you want to uphold; and you modeling what this should look like for the next generation.

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Public safety

# Sumter Fire Department's Coker, Geddings weigh in on importance of grain bin rescue training

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE  
alaysha@theitem.com

In South Carolina, agriculture is more than an industry; it's a way of life.

The state's diverse farming landscape that produces corn, peanuts, soybeans and wheat relies on grain storage facilities to manage and preserve such harvests. However, as essential as grain bins are, things can quickly become dangerous, making grain bin rescues critical.

Clemson Extension's Agricultural Safety Program and Agricultural Sciences Research and Fabrication Lab worked hand in hand to design and construct a grain entrapment simulator to



be used for training across the state, one of three in the nation. Since its release in 2023, the trailer carrying a grain bin has traveled to roughly 32 fire and rescue teams across the state to train and educate on rescuing a victim entrapped in a grain bin.



Sumter Fire Department Training Division's Capt. Chris Geddings and Battalion Chief Judson Coker make sure the department has the proper training to save lives, including instruction by Clemson Extension on grain bin rescue.

PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

## GRAIN BIN RESCUES

Purdue University reported 29 grain bin entrapments across the United States in 2021, the most recent year of available data. According to Clemson Extension, an individual has no more than three seconds to react after a fall into a grain bin, four to five seconds until they are trapped and 22 seconds until they are completely covered.

The states where grain bin entrapments are often reported are in Iowa, Indiana, Minnesota and Illinois — but our local fire and rescue team wants to be vigilant about its readiness if an inci-

dent ever occurred in our own backyard.

Sumter Fire Department would get its turn to simulate and train for grain bin rescues by being exposed to the potential hazards they may encounter on an actual call. It used a presentation to inform fire and rescue teams of the ways a victim can become entrapped as well as look at grains bins from a producer perspective. During the actual simulation, two firefighters are entrapped in the grain bin to ensure everyone

SEE RESCUE, PAGE A30








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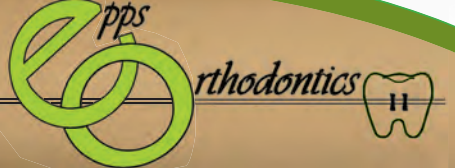


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**Purdue University reported 29 grain bin entrapments across the United States in 2021, the most recent year of available data. According to Clemson Extension, an individual has no more than three seconds to react after a fall into a grain bin, four to five seconds until they are trapped and 22 seconds until they are completely covered.**

**Sumter firefighters are seen inside a grain entrapment simulator designed and constructed by Clemson Extension's Agricultural Safety Program and Agricultural Sciences Research and Fabrication Lab.**

PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM



**ABOVE: Firefighter Nolan Rodriguez peers from inside a grain bin entrapment simulator during Sumter Fire Department's training on grain bin rescues.**

**LEFT: Firefighters step down inside a grain entrapment simulator designed and constructed by Clemson Extension's Agricultural Safety Program and Agricultural Sciences Research and Fabrication Lab.**

## RESCUE FROM PAGE A29

present has an opportunity to assist with rescue.

Waiting in the wings, watching their colleagues absorb the useful information was the training division's Capt. Chris Geddings and Battalion Chief Judson Coker.

### MEET THE NEW CHIEF AND CAPTAIN

Born and raised in Lake City, Coker began volunteering with South Lynches Fire Department in 2004. Though he enjoyed every minute of serving his community, he sought to expand his horizons by applying to Sumter Fire Department in 2007, where he was hired on that July. He moved up the ranks, serving as captain in the training division for seven years before being promoted to battalion chief in 2023.

Geddings, a Sumter native, would get his start with the local department a few years

earlier in 2000. Volunteering from May 1997 until his hire date in January, he moved up through the ranks to become an instructor, teaching small classes until becoming the training officer before being promoted to captain in the department's training division this past January 2024.

The duo works together, taking their combined 40-plus years of experience to ensure the generations of firefighters who have and will continue to come through those bright red doors are equipped with the knowledge to save lives.

### THE NEED TO LEARN

As the simulation came to an end, Coker garnered feedback on the training — much of it positive because of its uniqueness to their day-to-day calls. But that's nothing new, as these men and women undergo constant training to continue to keep the county and

SEE **RESCUE**, PAGE A31



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

## RESCUE

FROM PAGE A30

themselves safe.

“We feel we need to prepare our people as best as possible to be able to mitigate situations that they go to and recognize that they’re in a situation that’s unsafe and be able to get out of that situation before they get hurt or [worse],” Coker said.

“Training is like teaching a new fireman to become an old fireman,” Geddings said.

There are chiefs within the department sporting 30 years of experience, and this is the first time in their career they’ve had such training, Coker said. And while the next generation of fire and rescue members is prime for such training, their eager and ready to serve attitudes making department’s bay lively with hope, that adrenaline when heading to a call, especially one outside of the usual calls, can lead grave mistakes. Seasoned firefighters also find value in being privy to new information. Though their years of



Shelley Lovern, agricultural safety and agrability associate, speaks to Sumter firefighters about grain bin rescues.



experience comes with confidence to answer a variety of calls, what good is it if it lacks knowledge on how to handle them? Any side of the county you ven-

ture to will have grain bins, Geddings reasoned, so when the opportunity to train for grain bin rescues was presented, the department had to take it.

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## Sports

# Tylee Craft still fighting after graduation from North Carolina

BY TIM LEIBLE

tim@theitem.com

**T**ylee Craft is a fighter. The former Sumter High wide receiver has, unfortunately, been put in a position to prove that fact endlessly since March 14, 2022. On that date, Craft was diagnosed with lung cancer.

Craft went from promising receiver prospect to the sideline in the blink of an eye. He'd played two seasons at North Carolina when he received his diagnosis, playing in 10 games after a spectacular career at Sumter High that culminated in representing South Carolina in the Shrine Bowl as a senior. Throughout his constant battle, Craft has been a symbol of hope for so many others who fight various forms of the disease. He received the Disney Spirit Award in 2022 for his positivity through his struggles.

The last three years have been a grind for the former Gamecock. The cancer spread to his brain and spine in 2023. But Craft never backed down from the fight. With the support of his new school at the University of North Carolina, Craft continues to be a shining light for cancer patients. In May, Craft graduated from North Carolina, showing that no amount of adversity can hold him down.



*'It makes my days better because I'm able to go and spend time with the team and still be surrounded by my teammates and still go to classes and go to workouts when I can.'*

## TYLEE CRAFT

On being able to spend time with the Tar Heels football team

"I felt good. I was happy, and I was proud of myself that I was able to travel through these circumstances and still be able to graduate and take classes and be able to walk across the stage and walk with my teammates and friends," Craft said. "All of us were just happy we were able to graduate."

But Craft's time at North Carolina isn't over. After getting his undergraduate degree in exercise and sports science/sports administration, the former SHS star is working toward becoming an NFL scout. He's enrolling in the Masters of Applied Professional Studies program in the fall as he works to achieve that dream.

"I love football, so I want to stay involved in it," Craft said. "I love to travel, too, so hopefully I'll be able to get the job and travel and meet different athletes and kids that were my age that were going through the same process."

"I have many networks (at UNC). One of the guys that used to work with us, Darrell Moody, he was our NFL scout, so I'm going to see if he can connect me with some of his sources and see how it goes from there."

Craft hasn't completely shut the door on his dreams on the field, but he knows he has a tough hill to climb to get to that point physically. He's still very involved with the UNC football team. The Tar Heels dedicated their spring game to the wide receiver, and he's still an active participant in team meetings and other activities.

"I'm still fighting to get back to it, but



PHOTOS COURTESY OF TYLEE CRAFT

Former Sumter High standout Tylee Craft graduated from North Carolina amid an ongoing battle with cancer.

as of right now, it's looking kind of slow," Craft said.

Craft said his day-to-day pain comes in waves as he continues his battle. He recently finished another round of radiation in his head and spine and started a new round of chemotherapy.

"The past couple of weeks, I had a sore throat; it was hard to drink and swallow and eat. I lost a couple of pounds from that," Craft said. "But I'm gaining my weight back. I'm starting to eat a little bit more. Day to day, I've just been going to workouts and come back and get some rest."

The support from the Tar Heels has meant the world to Craft throughout this battle. On top of the top-flight health care he gets from the university's hospital, the UNC football program has been by his side since the

beginning.

"It means a lot knowing that they're still supporting no matter what and I can still be with the team," Craft said. "It makes my days better because I'm able to go and spend time with the team and still be surrounded by my teammates and still go to classes and go to workouts when I can. It helps me get through my days."

While Craft's fight is far from over, he's learned some important lessons about perseverance during the last three years. His graduation served as an excellent milestone to reflect on his journey so far.

"Keep swinging and keep fighting," Craft said of the advice he would give to others going through adversity. "There's always light at the end of the tunnel; never give up."



# American Legion softball still building in S.C.

BY TIM LEIBLE

tim@theitem.com

South Carolina is in the midst of its fourth season of American Legion softball. The state hosted its first season back in 2021, though the sport was not officially sanctioned by the American Legion until the following fall. Since then, the league has worked hard to progress from the 10 teams it hosted in the inaugural season.

Four years later, the league has more than doubled in size, jumping to 22 teams this summer. Last year, the tri-county added two local teams in the Sumter Post 15 Lady Patriots and the Bishopville Post 29 Express. But there's still a lot of work to be done, according to South Carolina Fastpitch Chairman Bob Scherer. He notes the continued rise of travel softball as a major barrier for entry, especially without the history of the American Legion baseball programs.

"The thing that hurts us the most is travel ball, and then you have vacations, Vacation Bible School, camps and volleyball. We're fighting all that at the same time," Scherer said. "We try to tell people that ours is not like travel ball. We don't demand that they win, we just demand that they have fun. We don't want them to get all bent out of shape about having to win. We want them to play, have fun, enhance their skills, laugh and holler.

"And we try not to charge anyone to join, unlike travel ball, which is very expensive. Plus, we play 16 games in eight nights, not 16 games on 16 nights like baseball, which is great for the parents and the post."

Scherer is on the front lines of expansion, working his way throughout the state trying to help various posts jump start their programs. He credits Sumter Post 15 Lady Legends head coach Glenn Posey for his help in the Southern Division, but Scherer still spends most of his time trying find the best ways to get different posts involved, whether that means forming a team near a post that can be sponsored after being created or helping posts with the logistics of building a squad.

"I go to the different posts and district meetings trying to get people to get a team going. It's been a lot of



NICH PITTS / THE SUMTER ITEM



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

**Sumter Lady Legends outfielder Ariana Evans bats during their win over Columbia Post 6 on June 12.**

phone calls, talking to people at conventions and conferences and trying to get district commanders to let me come down and talk to them," he said. "I'm trying to work different angles throughout the whole state."

New teams in the summer of 2024 included Chapin, Lugoff, two teams in

**LEFT:** The Sumter Lady Patriots joined the American Legion line-up last season as the league jumped up to 20 teams. There are now 22 teams in the league.

**BELOW:** The Sumter Lady Legends have played in all four seasons of American Legion softball as the sport continues to grow in the state.



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Anderson and two teams in North Augusta, but there were a few teams throughout the state that disbanded. The total number of teams went up by two after the league included 20 teams last summer. Sumter's Post 15, for instance, went from three teams to two, as the Lady Storm did not have a team

this summer. Newberry is another program that elected not to have a team this year, while Florence is taking the summer off and plans to come back next season. There are already some prospects for new squads next

# SOFTBALL FROM PAGE A33

season, including Greer. Scherer said he expects at least four or five new teams next summer.

“I’m trying to get as many teams as I can,” Scherer said.

Posey loves seeing some new teams get into the mix. His Lady Patriots opened the season at Chapin and enjoyed the trip to a new post.

“It’s always fun when you go to a new ball field and you’re not sure what to expect; the fun, the healthy anxiety around how strong they’re going to be,” Posey said. “You love strong competition, and you hope for strong competition. We love having extra teams, new teams.”

There are a couple of changes outside of the number of teams this summer. The championship is moving locations this season. Instead of Lander, the state championship will be decided at Columbia College. Scherer has also seen attendance grow, a strong sign for the league as a whole.

“Each year, we’re growing and growing. This year, I think we picked up over 1,600 new people coming to the games,” he said. “And in the last three years, seven girls got scholarships from colleges because they came and watched our games. They saw them in high school, and then they came and watched our championship or our all-star game, and that clinched it for some of them.”



Sumter Lady Patriots pitcher Lillie Ivey delivers against Bishopville on June 11.

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## Sports

# Russell 'Crazy Legs' Patterson reflects on spotlight finally shining on Negro League

BY TIM LEIBLE  
tim@theitem.com

Russell Patterson is a man like few others.

The 85-year-old former Negro League player known as "Crazy Legs" still has as sharp a tongue as he did when he suited up for the Indianapolis Clowns in the early 1960s. He's quick to make a joke or tell a tale of his wild upbringing in the sport of baseball, as he traveled across the South for any opportunity he could

latch onto to play his favorite sport.

"We played ball because we had to play ball," Patterson said while recounting memories of his playing days, which included a stretch of his career in Paterson, Virginia, where he played for three teams at the same time under three different names in order to quench his hunger for the game. "When I got into the Negro Leagues, you either played or you went home; there was no beating around

the bush."

Patterson is a walking museum, a fact that is evident by the number of times he travels to tell stories from his career that spanned over three decades. His house is full of memorabilia, postcards he collected from different stops in his career and newspaper clippings from both his time in the sport and more modern stories of the work of Cam Perron, a prominent Negro League historian whom Patterson has grown to know over the years.



MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Former Negro League baseball player Russell "Crazy Legs" Patterson has been involved with Major League Baseball as the league worked to give more attention to the Negro League. It was announced in May that Negro League players would receive new financial benefits and their statistics would be added to Major League record books.

The former pitcher, first baseman and outfielder still has the glove he played with during his days with the

Clowns on top of different bits and pieces from his career.

SEE PATTERSON, PAGE A36

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# PATTERSON

FROM PAGE A35

Maybe above all, Patterson is a man who demands respect. He's had conversations with representatives from Major League Baseball, including Commissioner Rob Manfred, and the MLB Players Association, among them Executive Director Tony Clark, as the organizations worked to bring the Negro Leagues more into the spotlight. In those talks, he spoke with no uncertain terms when discussing the treatment of former players.

"I tell them, 'You're all full of s\*\*\*,'" Patterson said with a laugh when speaking about a phone call last fall. "Who gives a damn what happened in 1962? We know it was racism. That's why we had the Negro Leagues. I'm worried about now, the guys who came from Alabama out of the mines."

Things have changed since that phone call.

The MLB made a few major announcements in late May, though some of the details caught more attention in the national media than others.

The headline-grabbing move was the decision to integrate Negro League statistics into the MLB record books. The league worked with a company called Seamheads and then went through a review process with the league's official statisticians, the Elias Sports Bureau. Suddenly, MLB has a new leader in batting average, slugging percentage and OPS (on base plus slugging percentage), and that man is former Homestead Grays and Pittsburgh Crawfords catcher Josh Gibson. That's all fine and good, but for players like Patterson, who spent two years in the Negro Leagues with the Clowns on top of three decades bouncing around different leagues, the other announcement was a little more important. MLB and its players association is expanding the financial assistance programs for living Negro Leagues players. Even athletes with shorter tenures like Patterson will receive annual financial benefit.

"That's my main thing," a chuckling Patterson said. "I told them I went



PHOTOS BY MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Memorabilia and photos at the home of former Negro League baseball player Russell 'Crazy Legs' Patterson including of photo of Patterson during his time in the military.

through a lot."

In Patterson's eyes, both announcements showed something he's been asking for his entire life: respect.

"Whether they give me anything or not, I'm just glad and happy that some-

body is recognizing what I did," he said. "I told them I don't care if you give me a penny, but you're going to honor what we did. We busted our butts."

Patterson has been busy recently traveling around for the Negro Leagues. He started with

a trip to Chattanooga on June 14. He spent a couple days there, signing autographs and attending a game for the local minor league squad, the Lookouts, against the Montgomery Biscuits. They wore the jerseys of the Chattanooga Choo-Choos, the former Negro League team in town. He then returned to his home in Savannah, where he went to the Telfair Museum to speak on his career. The climactic finale was a trip to Birmingham on June 20. He attended a game between the St. Louis Cardinals and San Francisco Giants in Rickwood Stadium, the former home of the Birmingham Black Barons and Willie Mays.

Patterson still remembers allowing a monstrous home run to Willie Smith of the Black Barons during his last game of the season with the Clowns in

1960. He shrugged off his catcher and threw a curveball to the fellow lefty, and Smith sent the ball into orbit.

"If you ever go to Alabama and Rickwood Field, look up in right field," Patterson said. "I tell people all the time, you remember that balloon that China sent? That was my ball from 1960, still going. My manager made me stand out in that field and run, run, run."

Crazy Legs is always happy to give

his time to the Negro Leagues, doing whatever he can to make sure people remember what they went through. He's glad the MLB is following suit.

"I am not a spokesman for the Negro Leagues, but I try to speak so people know the history," Patterson said. "We talk about mostly baseball, but it's talking about Black history. I eat this stuff up because I love it."



The glove of former Negro League baseball player Russell "Crazy Legs" Patterson is seen at his home in Sumter.

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## Sports

# Palmetto Pro Open helps bring athletes, money to Sumter

BY ADAM FLASH

adam@theitem.com

The road to the Majors doesn't always go through Sumter. For some it does. From June 3 to June 9, Palmetto Tennis Center held its 16th Palmetto Pro Open women's tournament, bringing together 60 players from near and far for an action-packed week.

With \$60,000 in prize money, the ITF Women's World Tennis Tour and USTA Pro Circuit event is categorized as a W75 tournament.

Qualifying took place before a singles bracket of 32 was narrowed

down and the doubles tournament also began. Spaniard Alicia Herrero Linana and Argentinian Melany Solange Krywoj won the doubles championship over Americans Sophie Chang and Dalayna Hewitt, while Canada's Carson Branstine rounded out the competition with the singles tournament, beating out Chang for the title.

"I think every year the tournament gets stronger. It gets better. The players that we're drawing here every year seem to be a little bit



SEE **TOURNAMENT**, PAGE A38



Sophie Chang competes during the Palmetto Pro Open at Palmetto Tennis Center in Sumter on Sunday, June 9.

PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Carson Branstine won the individual title on June 9, while Alicia Herrero Linana and Melany Solange Krywoj won the doubles title on June 8.

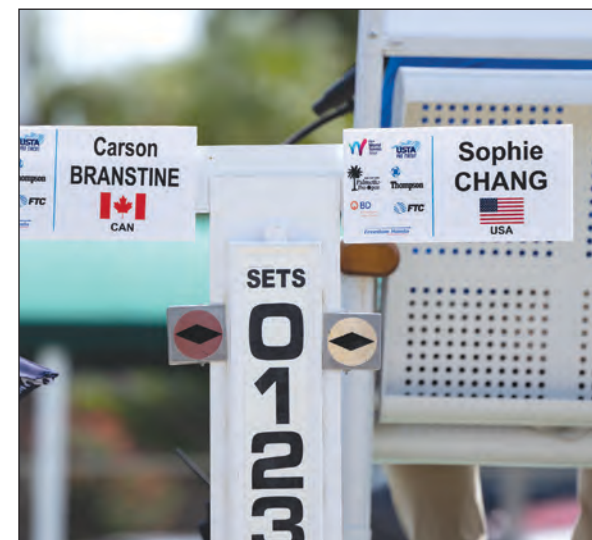


Alicia Herrero Linana and Melany Solange Krywoj celebrate their win at the event.



Alicia Herrero Linana and Melany Solange Krywoj compete during the 2024 Palmetto Pro Open in Sumter on Saturday, June 8.

PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM



## TOURNAMENT

FROM PAGE A37

more accomplished,” said Brian Hodge, tournament director. “I think a great example is the finals. It was a slug fest, and they both look like they have promising careers ahead of them, which is their goal — to hopefully break the top 100 and get into the majors.”

While visiting players, coaches, officials and others help stimulate Sumter’s local economy for the time

being, Hodge said he thinks the tournament’s largest impact on the city is simply its prestige, helping put Sumter’s name on the map more and more each year and offering a stepping stone to athletes hoping to make a living through tennis.

“This is just a half a step from the next level, which is where you see them playing on TV. And every year, at least a handful of these players we will see in the larger events that are televised,” he said.

And in some cases, athletes who play in the Palmetto Pro Open go on to be world-class players with Major

championship wins or high WTA rankings, as is the case with Naomi Osaka, four-time Major champion with a previous No. 1 world ranking, or Jessica Pegula, who’s currently ranked fifth in the world, among many others.

Originating in 2008 as a 10K event and as currently one of only four USTA Pro Circuit women’s events held each year in South Carolina, the tournament is evolving, hoping to bring in better competition and larger crowds each year.

“I think that every year we try to add to the tournament to make it even

more elite,” Hodge said, mentioning utilizing more of the city’s marketing resources to promote this year’s event and for next year, considering putting more early round matches in the evenings after work hours to make them more accessible for spectators leading up to the final matches during the weekend.

While this year’s tournament is done and dusted, the hype for next year begins, as the tennis center will be working to make next year the biggest and best yet, and the players could be making TV appearances before then. We’ll have to wait and see.



# A pillar in the community

## Jean Williams serves up smiles and great food at Emmanuel Soup Kitchen

BY BRUCE MILLS  
bruce@theitem.com

It is very often said that love is good for the soul, and it is on full display each week at Emmanuel United Methodist Church's soup kitchen.

Jean Williams and her band of volunteers serve up about 50 to 60 meals to the homeless and others in need each Monday through Thursday at the south Sumter facility that has been open since 1982.

Ms. Jean, as she is affectionately known, has had her hand in operating Emmanuel Soup Kitchen for 28 years and counting.

She recently sat down to discuss the ministry and how people can get involved.

...

The soup kitchen, at 421 S. Main St. in the church's family life center, mostly operates from donations of food, clothes and money.

She admits it can be a challenge at times to use the food that is donated, but a creative streak is in every great cook.

Monetary donations do help, especially because Ms. Jean likes to offer a variety of food options and buys forks, cups, plates and various paper prod-



PHOTOS BY MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Jean Williams laughs with regular volunteers Elaine Singleton and Billy McCoy at the soup kitchen Williams operates at Emmanuel United Methodist Church.

ucts, she added.

Given her time in the ministry, Williams has become a pillar in the south Sumter community, but she takes it all in stride.

"It's not hard work, it's just love continuously," she said. "It takes commitment and dedication, and I just call it love. If you did not love what you were doing, I guess you would not do it."

Of note, Williams only closes the soup kitchen for one week out of the year in August.



Jean Williams prepares mashed potatoes at the soup kitchen she operates at Emmanuel United Methodist Church.

SEE MS. JEAN, PAGE A40

## MS. JEAN FROM PAGE A39

“I just tell them, ‘Listen, y’all, I just thought I would give you a break from eating this stuff here. You can go home and cook what you want.’”

Two volunteers per day help her with meal preparation from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m., and then the meal distribution from 1 to 2 p.m.

Volunteers must be filled with love as well, considering their length of stay with the soup kitchen.

“Billy has been here 13 years, Linda 11 years and Sherri eight years,” Williams said.

“Minus a little back problem,” Ms. Jean says she is doing good and has no plans yet to retire.

“I have no idea how many years I have left,” Williams said. “I will just keep doing it until I cannot do it any longer. My brother kept telling me, ‘Jean, you know, you need to retire.’ I said, ‘Oliver, you retired, and now you can’t move.’ I said, ‘I don’t think I want to retire.’”



PHOTOS BY MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Volunteers Billy McCoy and Elaine Singleton help Jean Williams prepare plates at the soup kitchen Williams operates at Emmanuel United Methodist Church.

### HOW TO DONATE OR VOLUNTEER

Call Jean Williams. The soup kitchen's phone number is (803) 773-1624. She is generally there 11:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Thursday. Individuals can donate their time, food, clothing, shoes or money.



Jean Williams has been volunteering at Emmanuel United Methodist Church for almost 30 years.



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## Social Security Matters

# Reader shocked because Medicare increase results in loss of Social Security benefits

BY RUSSELL GLOOR

National Social Security Advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the non-profit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

**Dear Rusty:** My wife and I have taken a Social Security "Cut" — no 3.2% raise for us, due to something called "IRMAA," based on our income. We actually took, together, a \$400 a month cut. As far as I can tell from what they told me, we are means tested and were too successful, so our Medicare premiums were much higher, which resulted in our reduced Social Security for 2024. Have you sorted this out? And, if so, can I appeal this disgusting situation? Signed: Baffled Senior



Russell Gloor

have any other kind of sudden large bump in their taxable income. Essentially, if your income is over certain thresholds for your IRS filing status, you pay a higher "IRMAA" premium for your Medicare Part B (coverage for outpatient services) and your Part D (prescription drug coverage). And since your Medicare premium is automatically deducted from your Social Security payment, your net monthly Social Security payment goes down.

Any COLA added to your Social Security benefit is often consumed by an IRMAA increase to your Medicare premiums. And, to further complicate matters, your Medicare premium for the current year is determined by your income from two years prior, which means your 2024 Medicare premiums were determined by your 2022 income.

The IRMAA thresholds are different depending on your income tax filing status, but assuming you file your taxes as "married/jointly," your combined 2022 income had to be more than \$206,000 to cause IRMAA to apply in 2024. With income between \$206,000 and \$258,000, each of your Part B premiums would be \$244.60 (instead of the standard \$174.70), and your Part D premium (if you have Part D) would

incur another \$12.90 on top of your regular Part D premium amount. IRMAA premiums further increase on a sliding scale, and those with income of \$750,000 or more would pay a maximum Medicare Part B premium of \$584/month and would incur another \$81 per month added to their normal Part D premium. Thus, as you have noted, Medicare premiums are, indeed, "means-tested."

Can you appeal "this disgusting situation?" Well, you can always appeal any Social Security determination, but appealing IRMAA will only be successful if you can prove that the income they used to determine your 2024 Medicare premium was incorrect, or if you can convince them to use a more recent year with a lower income to calculate your Medicare premium. If you believe you can be successful, you should call Social Security (1-800-772-1213) to formally appeal the IRMAA premium, or you can submit form SSA-44 to appeal based on a "life-changing event."

I know that understanding how IRMAA works won't soften your dismay, but I can only explain the rules and how they work. Your 3.2% COLA increase for 2024 was used to offset some of the IRMAA Medicare

premium increase caused by your higher income, and it is IRMAA which caused your net Social Security payment to go down. FYI, your Medicare premiums are recalculated each year, so if your income goes down to below the IRMAA threshold for your tax filing status, then your Medicare premium will revert to the standard amount for each year.

I hope this clarifies why your Social Security payments went down and why you didn't see your COLA increase, but the AMAC Foundation is always available to answer any questions you may have about Social Security.

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## Traffic volume count made, noting number of gas stations downtown

“A traffic volume count, designed to alleviate congested traffic conditions in the downtown business areas of Sumter, was undertaken in March 1948. The count was being made by local Boy Scouts with the



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cooperation of City Manager J. A. Raffield and the city of Sumter,” according to W.W. Dibble of Smith-Dibble and Co., traffic engineers of Columbia.

“The one-day count was being conducted in the area bordered on the north by Calhoun Street, on the south by

Oakland Avenue, on the west by Washington Street, and on the east by Harvin Street. The purpose of the count was to determine how many cars use these sections of town in one day and to draw up a plan which would expedite traffic if necessary.”



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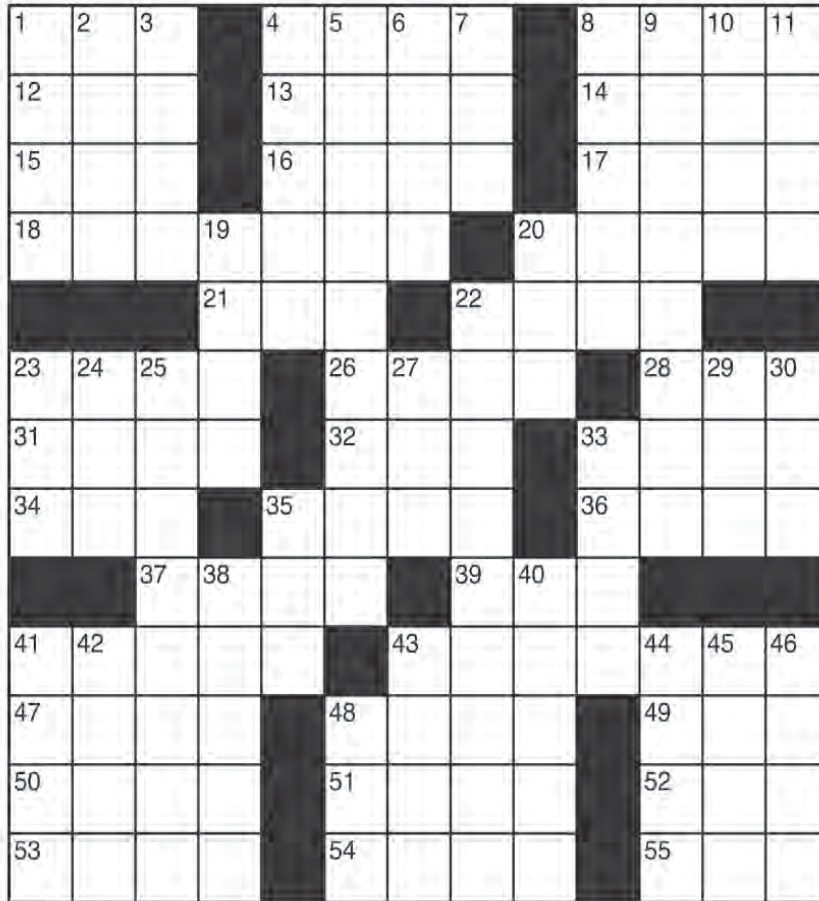
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### ACROSS

1. Pale gray
4. Stain
8. Sail
12. Tip of Italy
13. Volcanic output
14. Set of three
15. "\_\_\_\_\_ Miss Brooks"
16. Tennis event
17. Fruit skin
18. Thrive
20. Encounters
21. Apiece
22. City's smaller cousin
23. List of activities
26. Baby's bed
28. English beverage
31. Extremely dry
32. Tote
33. Curve
34. Gab
35. Including
36. Takes on
37. Bolster
39. Go for it
41. Foreigner
43. Intersected
47. Marigold's beginning
48. Street sign
49. Logger's tool
50. Simple
51. Dad
52. \_\_\_\_\_ and tonic
53. Poker word
54. Grace finale
55. Boar's home

### DOWN

1. On the summit of
2. Certain cream
3. Idol
4. Skier's locale
5. Desk item: 2 wds.
6. Through
7. Catch some rays
8. Scatter
9. Familiarized
10. "\_\_\_\_\_ Misbehavin'"
11. Poles
19. Tater
20. Criminal gang
22. Acrobat's walkway
23. Merry month
24. Period of note
25. Coldest
27. Ditch
29. Objective
30. Classified \_\_\_\_\_
33. Inlets
35. Hit the jackpot
38. Tint again
40. Comic Martin's partner
41. To the ocean
42. Scrawny
43. Chowder shellfish
44. Droops downward
45. Depart
46. Claim to be untrue
48. Health facility

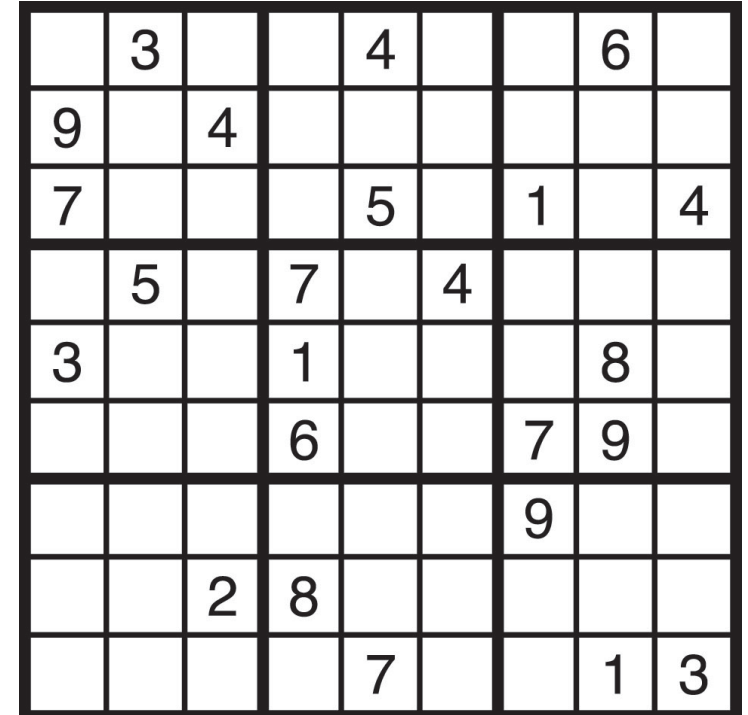


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**SOLUTION**



## SUDOKU

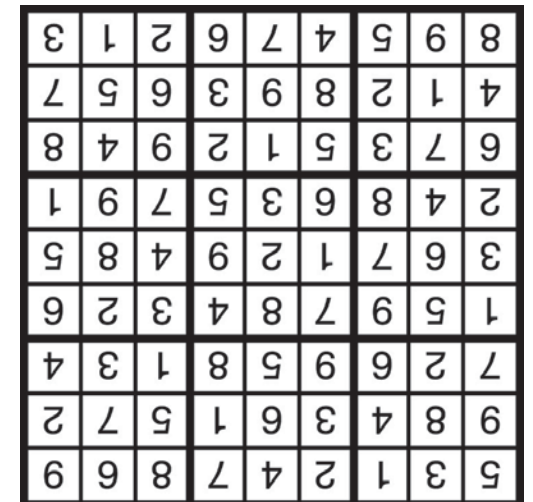


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### HOW TO PLAY:

Fill the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 through 9 only once. Each 3x3 box is outlined with a darker line. You already have a few numbers to get you started. Remember: you must not repeat the numbers 1 through 9 in the same line, column or 3x3 box.

**SOLUTION**





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# ALL ABOUT SUMTER

**The Sumter Item's official annual guide to all of the business, people and places that make Sumter County great will be released in August of 2024.**

**All About Sumter** will be delivered to Sumter-based businesses, available at key locations throughout the Sumter community and reach a digital audience of more than 150,000 through The Sumter Item's email and social platforms. Locally produced, All About Sumter will include an inclusive 'Friends of The Item' business directory, Shaw Air Force Base newcomers information, local features and resources for residents and visitors of Sumter County.

**Publish**  
August 1, 2024

**Deadline**  
June 28, 2024

the  
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Shaw AFB

# Iron Hand 24-03

U.S. airmen assigned to the 20th Fighter Wing at Shaw Air Force Base board a U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III assigned to the 15th Airlift Squadron at Joint Base Charleston during Iron Hand 24-03 at North Auxiliary Airfield. Two C-17 Globemaster IIIs from Joint Base Charleston provided airlift for 94 members of the 20th Fighter Wing for the duration of the exercise. Iron Hand displays the Air Force's shift from large force packages to smaller, multidisciplinary teams capable of combat support. Various units from the 20th Fighter Wing integrate during Iron Hand to successfully generate airpower and maintain security during the exercise.

PHOTOS BY U.S. AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. DALLIN WRYE



U.S. Air Force Airman First Class Ty Adkinson, 77th Fighter Generation Squadron environmental and electrical specialist, poses for a photo during Iron Hand 24-03.



U.S. Air Force Airman First Class Daniel Rodriguez, 20th Security Forces Squadron installation entry controller, secures the perimeter during Iron Hand 24-03.



U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Keaton Hartsook, 20th Equipment Maintenance Squadron conventional maintenance crew chief, attaches the MAU-169 computer control group to the GBU-12 bomb during Iron Hand 24-03 at North Auxiliary Airfield. The 20th EMS built a total of 240 sticks of chaff and flare and nine bombs at the contingency location.



A U.S. Air Force airman assigned to the 77th Fighter Generation Squadron directs an F-16C Fighting Falcon during Iron Hand 24-03.



A U.S. Air Force pilot assigned to 77th Fighter Squadron at Shaw Air Force Base taxis during Iron Hand 24-03. Once the location was secure, airmen began integrated combat turns to deliver and recover airpower.

# Iron Hand 24-03



PHOTOS BY U.S. AIR FORCE STAFF SGT. DALLIN WRYE

U.S. Air Force Senior Airman Javon Henderson, 20th Logistics Readiness Squadron fire and refueling vehicle maintenance journeyman, secures the perimeter during Iron Hand 24-03 at North Auxiliary Airfield. Exercise Iron Hand scenarios throughout the year include Mission Generation Force Element, Agile Combat Employment, hurricane response and active threat response.



U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Corbin Bennett, 20th EMS conventional maintenance crew chief, begins assembly of a GBU-12 bomb during Iron Hand 24-03 at North Auxiliary Airfield. The 20th Equipment Maintenance Squadron participated in Iron Hand on site for the first time.



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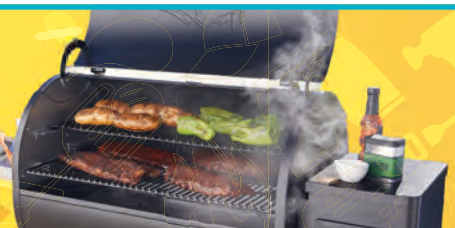


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