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Sylvia Jo's restaurant
owner says her heart has
always been in cooking


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SARAH SONNTAG / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sumter native Amber Spencer started Sylvia Jo's in 2017 with just a dream, memories of her grandmother and a love for cooking. She has since grown a loyal following that she continues to satisfy with her homemade Southern comfort meals on East Liberty Street.

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From the publisher

Readers will find all election coverage needed in *The Item* and *Impact*

Election season is just around the corner, and *The Item* is committed to keeping you informed about the races and issues on the ballot.

Studies show that the presence of local news means, among other things, that more people vote in local elections. We think that's important, and while the presidential election will get most of the national headlines, we'll focus more on the races closer to home that help shape our communities.

Subscribers to *The Item* will receive a comprehensive Voter's Guide prior

to the election, which will include everything you need to know about candidates and local races before you head to the voting booth. If you are not a subscriber to *The Item*, upcoming editions of this free, monthly publication — *The Sumter Item Impact* — will include things you need to know as well.



Vince Johnson

Many communities similar to Sumter across America will not be so lucky. Thousands of newspapers have closed in recent years, while others struggle to employ local journalists. The absence of local news is

causing great harm to those communities, and I'm fearful that another election cycle without local journalists



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

asking questions and providing a degree of oversight will only amplify those issues in news-less communities.

If you are a subscriber to *The Item*, I'm sure you occasionally see an article that frustrates you or that you think we could've done better in presenting the information. Sometimes, I agree with a reader who says such things, and we're used to being scrutinized in a public-facing profession.

However, in this election season, don't let human imperfection overshadow that fact that we have a community-based newspaper in Sumter.

We have a talented, passionate team of local journalists committed to adding value to our communities.

If you value being informed about topics close to home, there are a few ways you can help ensure Sumter has local news for years and decades to come. First, subscribe to *The Item*, and second, tell a friend or family member about us and why you think our continuation is important.

We exist to serve our readers and advertisers, and our existence is important to those we serve. I hope you feel informed this election season.

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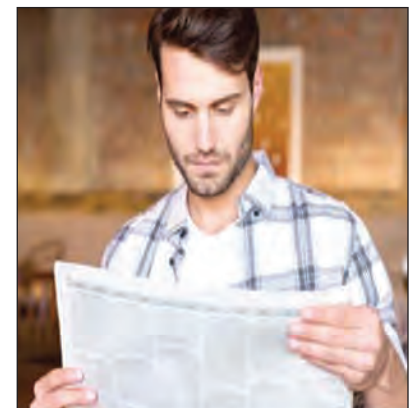
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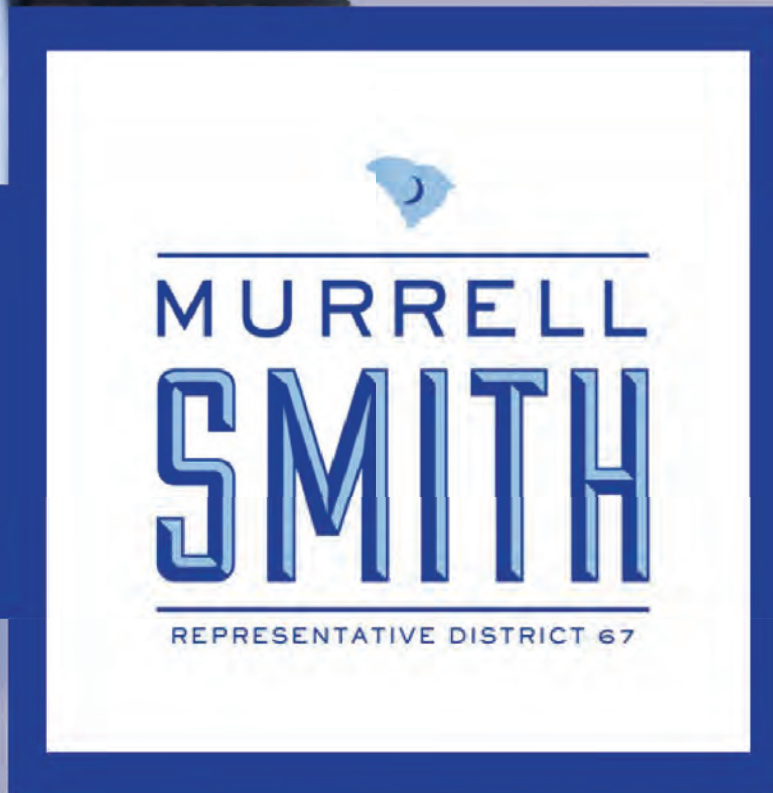
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Government

Filing for mayor, city council elections open through July 31

3 seats up; school board filing opens August

BY KAYLA GREEN

kayla@theitem.com

With ballots set for elections featuring candidates running behind a party, the last piece to the Nov. 5 general election is local nonpartisan races.

In Sumter, that includes the mayor and three city council seats as well as four seats on the Sumter School District Board of Trustees.

Filing for the mayor and city council seats began July 15 at noon and is open through July 31 at noon. Those wishing to run for any of those seats must file with Sumter City Clerk Linda Hammett at the Sumter Opera House, 21 N. Main St. Office hours are 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (803) 436-2578 for additional information or to make an appointment.

Candidates are required to fill out a Statement of Intention of Candidacy Form, which can be found in the "Candidate Information" section of www.scvotes.gov, at the county election office and at the city clerk's office.

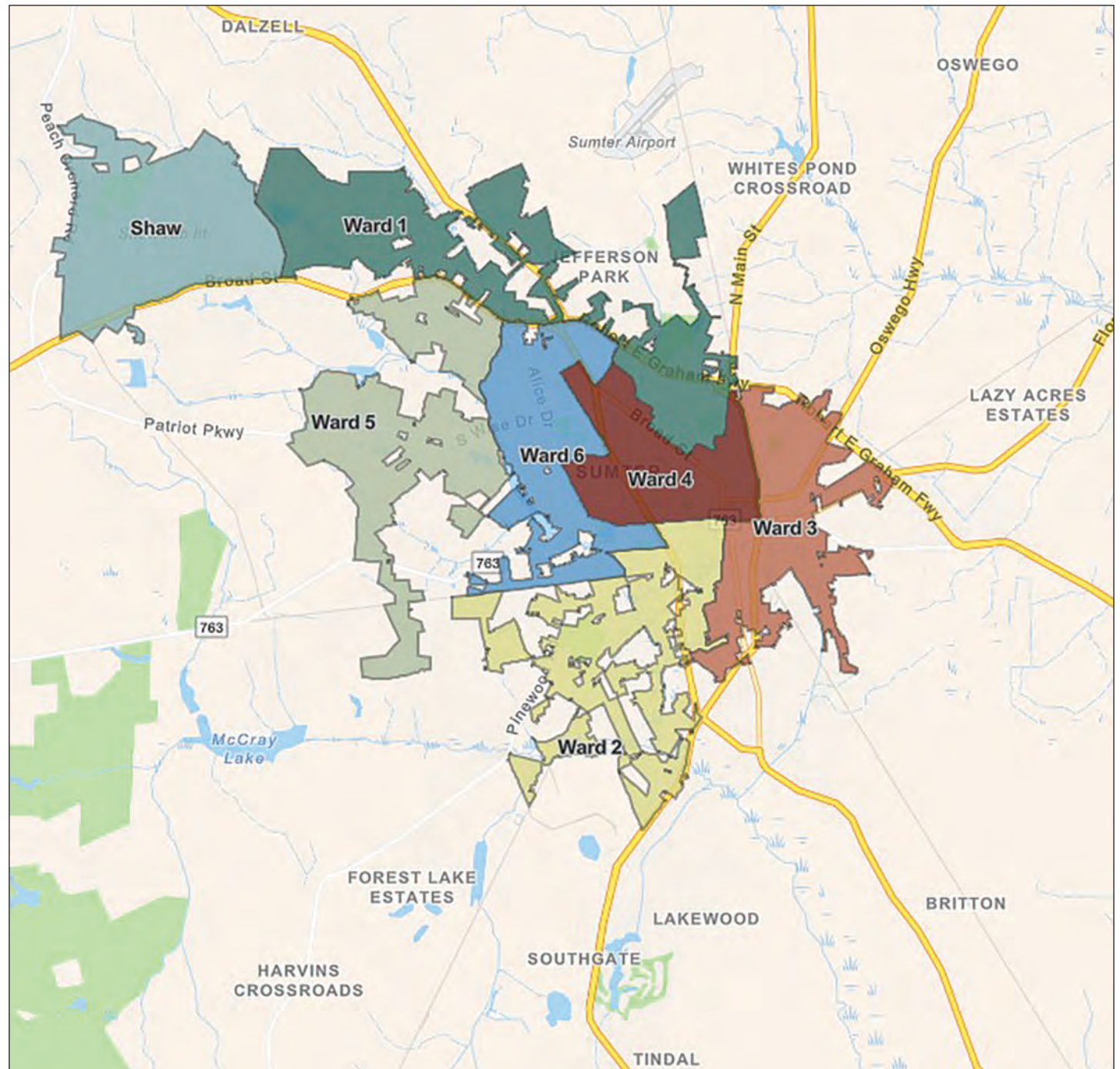
Candidates are also required to file a Statement of Economic Interest and a Campaign Disclosure online with the State Ethics Commission at <http://ethics.sc.gov>. Failure to file these documents may result in a candidate fine but will not disqualify a candidate from election.

Mayor David Merchant announced in March that he is running for reelection. He will be seeking his second term in the city's top role after serving on city council since 2012. He was elected as mayor in 2020.

Council seats up for election in November are Ward 2, held by James B. Blassingame, Ward 4, held by Steve H. Corley, and Ward 6, held by Gifford M. Shaw. Corley told *The Sumter Item's* Bruce Mills he will not be seeking a third term. Blassingame and Shaw have each filed to seek reelection for a second term.

SCHOOL BOARD

Filing for the school board seats will take place Aug. 1 at noon through Aug. 15 at noon. Those wishing to run for



This map shows the City of Sumter broken down into city council ward districts.

these seats must file with Patricia Jefferson at the Sumter County Voter Registration and Elections Office, 129 E Liberty St. Office hours at 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Call (803) 436-2310 or (803) 436-2312.

The four school board seats up for

election are Daniel P. Palumbo's District 1 seat, Brittany English's District 2 seat, Shery White's District 7 seat and Bonnie S. Disney's District 9 seat.

All nine school board districts were redrawn and up for election after 2020 Census redistricting and a law change

from a few years ago that expanded the board from seven single-member districts and two at-large seats to nine single-member districts for the 2022 election.

If a runoff is necessary after the Nov. 5 election, it will be held Nov. 19.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Education

3 storylines to know from Sumter School District this month

BY KAYLA GREEN

kayla@theitem.com

1. BOARD VOTES TO TRANSFER \$1.7M FOR NEW CRESTWOOD STADIUM

Crestwood High School's football team will imminently have an on-campus place to play in for the first time ever. The school opened in 1996.

The school board voted to transfer \$1.7 million in capital funds to complete the stadium at a special-called meeting in late June, bringing the total project cost to \$5.1 million. The stadium will serve the Knights' football and soccer teams, and the contractor will also do some work on the softball field.

The lone dissenting vote, Daniel Palumbo, finance committee chairman, questioned the project going over budget, its timeline and designer's

choice to install turf.

Administration said inflation affected the budget and that the team's coaching staff preferred turf. The timeline for completion is mid-season, but specifics are subject to change according to weather and other general construction delays.

The football team has always played its home games at Hillcrest Middle School in Dalzell.

2. SUMTER HIGH SALUTATORIAN NAMED NATIONAL MERIT SCHOLARSHIP FINALIST WINNER

It's one thing to be named among the top of your high school class. Taeyoung "Aiden" Kim achieved something only a few thousand did this year nationwide and that no Sumter School District student has done in at least a decade.

Kim, Sumter High School's Class of 2024 salutatorian, was named a Na-

tional Merit Scholarship Program Finalist winner, which is only bestowed on about 7,140 U.S. high school seniors each year.

In doing so, he earned a \$1,500 scholarship per semester to attend Clemson University, where he intends to major in biological sciences and eventually become a scientific researcher and help create new medicines to treat disease. It will supplement a full-ride scholarship he received from a local private donor in the Harmon Scholarship.

Kim finished No. 2 out of about 446 seniors at Sumter with a weighted GPA of 5.429, which is a 4.0 unweighted. He graduated from the school's International Baccalaureate program.

3. BOARD PASSES BUDGET WITHOUT MILLAGE INCREASE REQUEST, 7-1

For the first time in recent memory, Sumter's school board passed its up-

coming year's budget without requesting a millage increase from Sumter County Council.

The vote was 7-1, with Shawn Ragin as the only trustee in opposition.

As calculated, the district's spending will exceed revenues by about \$3 million, and the fund balance, or the district's reserves, will be used to offset the difference, a move the state legislature has been pushing.

The district's fund balance, as of June 30, 2023, was \$51.4 million. It has grown in recent years, largely because of teacher and staff vacancies, from \$14.4 million. The current total is about 4.5 months of expenditures on hand. State law requires school districts to have at least one month of expenditures in reserves.

Information for this article was taken from reporting by Item education reporter Bruce Mills.

LEARNING AND THE BRAIN

Cellphone bans and brains

The South Carolina Board of Education may "require districts to adopt a policy banning cellphones during the school day or risk losing state funding," a decision they will likely make during their next meeting on Aug. 13, which means the earliest the policy could be reasonably enforced is January, according to the *SC Daily Gazette*.

The ultimate goal of this move is to improve student learning, while also quelling issues like online bullying (at least during the school day). But how exactly does the possession of a cellphone disrupt a student's



Brent Kanefit

learning?

First, we know everyone has a limited active working memory. On average, we can handle four-six novel items at a given time. This is the reason, for example, that when you drive into an unfa-

miliar big city, you turn the radio down, ask your children politely (ahem) to quiet down in the back and demonstrate mild irritation with your spouse who is trying to help you navigate. This experience is called "cognitive overload"—you are being overwhelmed with new information. The radio and yelling in the back are adding to that load and need to be reduced. When students are using their phones during the school day or in class for non-academic purposes, they are filling their active working memory with novel items that are irrelevant to the learning that needs to happen. Banning cellphones is like you turn-

ing that radio down and focusing on what's important: getting to your destination safely (or learning).

Consequently, this cognitive phenomenon is why memorizing content is still important (despite the ability to "Google" everything), but I'll explore that topic down the road.

Next, we cannot multitask. While my wife might jokingly disagree with me on this issue, research supports the claim — the brain cannot do two cognitive tasks at the same time. Instead, the brain switches tasks, which has two major impacts on learning: one, switching between tasks — like when a student stops writing their paper and checks a text message on their phone — costs time; researchers estimate that this "transactional cost" is 10-20 minutes on av-

erage before the student can refocus on the task in front of them. Whenever a parent raises a concern about their child spending too much time on their homework each night, the first thing I ask is whether their child has their phone next to them when they're doing their homework. That alone may account for why a homework load of an hour now takes three.

And switching tasks takes energy, which means you fatigue faster (and all of the consequent effects of fatigue apply: grumpiness, poor decision making, less discipline). If you sit in front of a screen all day and are constantly switching tasks, you have a greater likelihood of coming home exhausted,

CELLPHONES FROM PAGE A5

eating less healthy food, snapping at your children, avoiding the gym, etc. This mental fatigue impacts everything you do. What we recommend in the education world is monotasking. Monotasking is focusing on one task at a time for a certain length (e.g., 20 minutes of self-testing, 5-minute break to check your notifications). It's harder than it sounds!

Finally, we know through research that "there is no greater influence on student outcomes than teacher quality," and we can easily observe how a cellphone becomes a barrier between the student and their greatest asset. I once heard of a principal who would ask incoming teachers, "What is the most important subject a student will learn?" They always replied with a specific topic: "every student should learn the classics" or "every student in the 21st century will need to know how to code" or "with-

out statistics, students are basically illiterate." While these were all fine, practical answers and all partially true, the principal claimed that "No, it's the faculty that is the most important subject a student will learn."

What he meant was that the relationship between a student and a teacher has the most profound impact on student growth and development. And as I am sure most of us have experienced, it is hard to have a real and positive relationship with someone who is constantly checking their phone for recent activity. While I think "banning" is a practice we should be reluctant to employ, at least not without deep consideration, this shift in S.C. educational policy may bear fruit.

It is a shift in how we teach our students, but still, we have yet to clearly define why we educate our students, for what



purpose exactly — what narrative are our students living in? In "The End of Education," Neil Postman argues that "[w]ithout a narrative, life has no

meaning. Without meaning, learning has no purpose. Without a purpose, schools are houses of detention, not attention." In short, this cellphone

ban is attempting to recapture students' attention. Now, what are we asking them to pay attention to? I'll explore that question in my next article.

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Government

5 storylines to know from local government happenings this month

BY KAYLA GREEN
kayla@theitem.com

1. REZONING REQUESTS MAY BRING NEW BUSINESSES

A hookah lounge and another Dollar General are poised to get the green light after being approved by the Sumter City-County Board of Zoning Appeals and Sumter City-County Planning Commission, respectively.

The applicant for the lounge, slated for 4672 Broad St., told government officials at a meeting July 10 that she has talked with all her potential neighbors in a business strip on the south side of Broad Street and received no objections. No alcohol will be sold on premises for on-premises consumption.

If a Dollar General comes to fruition at 3555 Camden Hwy. in Dalzell, it would be the 21st such business in Sumter County.

The application indicates the store would be 12,480 square feet and include 50 parking spaces.

2. ABANDONED HOME DEMOLISHED

Funding from a community development block grant, or CDBG, was recently used to demolish an old, abandoned home in disrepair at 410 Church St.

Demolitions such as this tearing down of the four-bedroom, three-bathroom home with a rotted foundation and stairs crumbled to its cinder block foundations require the City of Sumter having an entitlement community status based on its population density to receive federal CDBG money, as well as property owner approval. Homeowners retain ownership of the land after the demolition is complete to rebuild as they wish.

According to the city, this Church Street home was the eighth demolition this fiscal year.

Codes Director John Macloskie said there are an estimated 150-200 blighted structures that could be covered and



SARAH SONNTAG / THE SUMTER ITEM

A home at 410 Church St. is demolished on Friday, June 28, made possible by the 2023-24 Community Development Block Grant and the Sumter Pride Program.

SEE GOVERNMENT, PAGE A8





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GOVERNMENT

FROM PAGE A7

up for demolition under a separate federal grant from Congressman Jim Clyburn's office.

3. TRANSPORTATION IMPROVEMENTS

An estimated 6,500 vehicles use the West Liberty Street corridor daily, a number that is poised to grow to 8,000 in coming years, and improvements to the area should pick up steam in 2026, local officials say.

The area was slated as a high-priority project based on traffic and crash data, with intersections being the main place crashes have occurred between 2013 and 2016.

This corridor is one of a handful of transportation projects at top of mind with more than \$239 million coming from state and federal funding as well as revenues remaining from the Penny for Progress sales tax initiative voters approved in 2014. It was discussed at a recent Sumter Area Transportation Study Policy Committee meeting, where transportation planning is discussed in front of the public.



Other updates included:

- Engineering and right-of-way acquisition work is underway for the Manning Avenue Bridge replacement project, with contracts expected to move forward early next year;
- Contracts are expected for a revitalization project for North Main Street in spring 2025, with right-of-way

acquisition and utility coordination underway; and

- Intersection improvements at Broad Street and North Saint Pauls Church Road is expected to start to move forward in summer 2025.

4. NO TAX INCREASE IN CITY BUDGET

The city's new budget cycle started

July 1, and it was passed balanced with no tax increase.

Last year's budget did include an increase to the millage rate, which is the formula used to calculate property taxes, the first increase in 15 years.

5. WASTEWATER TREATMENT PLANT UPGRADES COMING

State funding will bring improvements to the Pocatigo Wastewater Treatment Plant Bio Solids Drying Plant, which treats wastewater from Sumter and Mayesville before it is discharged into the Pocatigo River and converts sludge into a low-grade marketable soil enhancer.

Sumter City Council approved \$1.2 million for the installation and startup of dust hazard safety upgrade equipment, which is needed in the treatment process.

The plant has a daily capacity of 24 million gallons, and it collects, treats and discharges close to 5 billion gallons of wastewater annually.

Information for this article was taken from reporting by Item government reporters Deirdre Currin and (former) Bryn Eddy.

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Consumer tips

U.S. Dept. of Energy provides tips on keeping your home cooler

BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY

When it is hot outside and you are trying to keep your home cool, here are some things you can do that are free and some others that are simple and inexpensive.

OPERATE THERMOSTAT EFFICIENTLY

— Set your thermostat at a temperature you find comfortable and that provides humidity control, if needed. The smaller the difference between the indoor and outdoor temperatures, the lower your overall cooling bill will be.

— Keep your house warmer than normal when you are away, and lower the thermostat setting when you return home and need cooling. A programmable thermostat allows you to do this au-

tomatically and without sacrificing comfort. Visit www.energy.gov/energysaver/programmable-thermostats.

— Avoid setting your thermostat at a colder setting than normal when you first turn on your air conditioner. It will not cool your home any faster and could result in excessive cooling and unnecessary expense.

FANS AND VENTILATION STRATEGIES

— Turn off ceiling fans when you leave the room. Remember that fans cool people, not rooms, by creating a wind chill effect.

— Circulating fans including ceiling fans, table fans, floor fans and fans mounted to poles or walls create a wind chill effect that will make you more comfortable in your home, even if it's

also cooled by natural ventilation or air conditioning.

— When you shower or take a bath, use the bathroom fan to remove heat and humidity from your home. Your laundry room might also benefit from spot ventilation. Find ENERGY STAR ventilating fans at www.energystar.gov/products/ventilation_fans.

KEEP COOLING SYSTEM RUNNING EFFICIENTLY

— For maximum energy affordability, schedule regular maintenance for your cooling equipment.

— Avoid placing lamps or TV sets near your room air-conditioning thermostat. The thermostat senses heat from these appliances, which can cause the air conditioner to run longer than necessary.

— Learn additional tips for operating a room air conditioner efficiently at www.energy.gov/energysaver/room-air-conditioners.

— Vacuum your air intake vents regularly to remove any dust buildup. Ensure that furniture and other objects

are not blocking the airflow through your registers.

USE YOUR WINDOWS TO KEEP OUT HEAT

— Install window coverings to prevent heat gain through your windows during the day. Visit www.energy.gov/energysaver/energy-efficient-window-coverings.

KEEP HOT AIR OUT

— Seal cracks and openings to prevent warm air from leaking into your home. Visit www.energy.gov/energysaver/air-sealing-your-home.

— Add caulk or weatherstripping to seal air leaks around doors and windows. Find how to select and apply the appropriate caulk at www.energy.gov/energysaver/caulking. Learn how to select and apply weatherstripping at www.energy.gov/energysaver/weatherstripping.

Find other ways to improve the energy efficiency of your windows at www.energy.gov/energysaver/update-or-replace-windows.



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Sumter classics



Sumter's Sylvia Jo's serves up beloved classic Southern foods

BY SARAH SONNTAG

sarah@theitem.com

The sound of sizzling burgers and chatting locals greets you at the door of Sylvia Jo's restaurant.

At 541 E. Liberty St. in Sumter, the classic "hometown diner" has served up beloved Southern dishes like fried chicken and burgers for seven years and continues to bring in loyal locals.

Sumter native and diner owner Amber Spencer started on her restaurant journey at 19 years old. She ran a restaurant right next door to what would later be Sylvia Jo's for nearly three years until she had to give it up.

"I didn't know what I was doing. All I knew was how to cook," Spencer said.

That did not stop her, as she continued on her cooking journey, working at various restaurants and strengthening her business expertise. Then, in 2017, the opportunity presented itself for Spencer to rent out the space where Hanna's Grill, a childhood favorite of hers, previously existed.

"My heart has always been in cooking, and the opportunity presented itself ... and so [I] did that."

She explained the diner is named after her "Grandmama" Sylvia Jo, whom she credited for her passion for



PHOTOS BY SARAH SONNTAG / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sylvia Jo's was started in 2017 by Sumter native Amber Spencer. The diner is named after her grandma, Sylvia Jo, who inspired a love of cooking in Spencer at a young age. The restaurant serves up classic Southern comfort foods like fried chicken and onion rings Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., on Liberty Street in Sumter.

SEE SYLVIA JO'S, PAGE A13

Sumter's Next Generation

Next Generation News Editor Maple reflects on 1 year of Generation Z-focused series

Time flies when you're having fun.

It feels like yesterday that the first issue of Sumter's Next Generation was released to the public. On Aug. 2, 2023, I, along with *The Item's* graphic designer Cary Howard, Executive Editor Kayla Green, Publisher Vince Johnson and former videographer Richie Weber, witnessed the fruits of our hard work during the American Press Institute's Table Stakes Local News Transformation Program come to fruition.

We understood not everyone's youth is defined by scoreboards and white-striped fields — mine definitely wasn't. Many students in our community make exceptional strides in academics, the arts, STEAM, career readiness and general excellence — but did not traditionally receive the same media coverage as their athletic peers. Sumter's Next Generation was our way of filling that void voiced by many in our community and serves as a natural extension of what we pride our organization on: telling the full story of our communities, not just the bad.

The public reception of the series was beyond what we could've imagined.

Within the first few days of our first feature on Sumter High's Jordyn Mihlbauer posting to Instagram, our reel reached 6,944% more non-followers than average. The series' longevity was cemented in the admiration and pride our community and folks across the platform had for these young trailblazers. There was an eagerness to celebrate their achievements and aspirations, and our youth were excited to stand alongside their athletic peers in the century-plus-long legacy of *The Sumter Item*. A portion of our community that was once underserved is now

receiving well-deserved recognition.

Since that day, we have published 20 narratives detailing how the next generation is shaping our future in fields such as arts and entertainment, fire-fighting, medicine, environmental sustainability and more. While every feature has a special place in my heart and every student will be equally as important to me, my most memorable feature has to be Jordyn's. It's



Alaysha Maple

where we got our foothold, where we mapped out how we would pull off a bi-weekly print and video series, where we brainstormed how we would make this a success — where I challenged myself to write in a language and length that resonated with Gen Z. That first feature is where my nerves were most present because this was new

for me, new for Sumter, and I wanted our mission to be conveyed with sincerity and devotion. It was that first feature that started it all for us — and for our youth.

Our young folks have received national recognition, being talked about on platforms like Better News — a project powered by API to highlight the best practices of journalism, provide guidance on important issues facing news organizations and share important lessons from participants of the Table Stakes Program — and the *It's All Journalism* podcast.

Our series alumni have gone on to receive state proclamations for their hard work, prepare for the opening of their second theater production, be named their school's valedictorian and reach great heights. In conversations with these students, many have shared how their confidence has soared since their feature was published. They've also mentioned how new opportunities have emerged within the community,



RICHEL WEBER / THE SUMTER ITEM

Jordyn Mihlbauer was the first person featured in Sumter's Next Generation in August 2023. The Sumter High School graduate was the senior class vice president and was involved in many extracurricular activities. She now attends USC in Columbia, majoring in information science.



Charles Pulcher moved to Sumter in 2022 and has embraced the change and camaraderie of the Sumter and Shaw community. He was featured in Next Generation in April.

ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Crestwood High School Senior Class President and Marching Band Drum Major Jonathan Singleton shared his passion and purpose of pursuing music throughout high school and going into college in a February edition of Next Generation.

ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM



NEXT GENERATION FROM PAGE A11

allowing them to further their aspirations, contribute in meaningful ways and be a source of inspiration for younger students.

In addition to expanding our reach to new audiences, our team has also expanded. Zac Hooks, videographer, and Adam Flash, photographer, were brought on weeks after the series launched. Together, we have had the privilege of watching students blossom from being ridden with nerves to exuding great confidence.

Being a native of Sumter and writing about students who remind me of my younger self — hopeful, driven and vying for a way to share that passion with the world — has been an incredibly fulfilling experience. Coming back from college to serve my community in a way I had never thought possible but now can't imagine myself not doing has been a dream come true. Sumter's Next Generation has had a significant impact on me as a writer and a community member, making me conscious of how I can be a resource to the next genera-

tion. It's important to be aware of that responsibility and to embrace it fully.

And at the core of Sumter's Next Generation, that's what it's about. Our goal is to provide these students with a platform to be appreciated by their community in a way they hadn't been before. This series has not only allowed me to reflect on the optimism and potential of our youth, but also reinforce the role we, as a newspaper and community members, play in nurturing and showcasing their talents.

Seeing the positive changes and the tangible impacts of these students' lives reaffirms the importance of giving youth the space to express their aspirations and successes. I couldn't be prouder to be a part of a platform with such a meaningful purpose.

One year down, many more to go.

New episodes, in print and video, publish twice a month. Go to www.theitem.com/nextgen to read previous features and Instagram @sumteritem to watch previous episodes.



ZAC HOOKS / THE SUMTER ITEM

Ninja Warrior Carleigh Fraser was featured in Sumter's Next Generation in December 2023. She qualified for the Ultimate Ninja Athletic Association's World Finals in Orlando, Florida, that year after being involved in the sport for about a decade. She competed against athletes from the United States, Australia, Canada, China, United Kingdom, Guam, Hong Kong, Italy, Philippines, Poland and Puerto Rico and finished 13th in the world for female ninja warriors ages 16 to 39.

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SYLVIA JO'S

FROM PAGE A10

cooking. She said, "I spent lots of time with my grandmama as a child. Everybody else had friends. I had my grandmama."

The delicious food served at the diner is also somewhat inspired by Spencer's grandmother, she said, explaining, "[My grandmama] never did anything extravagant. [Her food] was just always simple and good."

Spencer follows in her grandmother's footsteps, serving up good old "country cooking," with her signature dish being the cheeseburger basket. Spencer's secret to such a famously good meal is making every item home-

made and to her customers' liking. Hamburger patties and fries are shaped, cut and cooked fresh daily at the restaurant. Spencer, who loves a challenge, even goes so far as to ask customers exactly how they want their food so she can fix it the way their "mama" would have.

Along with cheeseburgers, Sylvia Jo's serves onion rings, fried chicken, pork and rice and much more Monday through Friday, 7 a.m. to 2 p.m., as hot-and-ready items on their buffet or made fresh to order. Spencer emphasized that her diner puts the "home" in home cooking.

"We're a big family," she said. "We try to make everybody feel important that walks through the door. We want people to feel at home here."



PHOTOS BY SARAH SONNTAG / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sylvia Jo's restaurant aims to make customers feel at home and be able to find the kind of food their mama would have made for them.

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Election 2024

Penny for Progress projects support Sumter's economic development, group leader says

BY KAYLA GREEN
kayla@theitem.com

Recruiting national and global industrial companies to set up shop in Sumter County is a catapult for the area's economic prosperity.

When voters said no to a 1% increase in sales tax to support millions in capital improvement projects during the next seven years in 2022, the team responsible for getting such companies to move here lost two years of progress.

Sumter Economic Development wants the vote to go the other way this November. Among the 30 projects, which were recently finalized by a committee then approved by Sumter County Council, that will be on Sum-

ter voters' ballots in an all-or-nothing referendum is \$3.5 million that would be used for two projects to bolster the city-county entity's ability to bring in companies and create new jobs.

DIRECT IMPACTS ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

If the Penny for Progress initiative passes this fall, \$2 million of revenues from the capital penny sales tax would go toward industrial infrastructure to construct a 200,000-square-foot "pad ready" industrial site with options to expand for industrial recruitment. Work would include earth work, site work and civil engineering to prepare a property so that when a company does want to build in Sumter, a site is ready to break ground, according to



ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

VAC company leaders and local and state officials attended the groundbreaking ceremony for eVAC Magnetics in Pocatotal Industrial Park off U.S. 521 recently.

Jay Schwedler, president and CEO at TheLink Economic Alliance and Sumter Economic Development/Sumter-EDGE.

The other \$1.5 million would go toward property acquisition "to make sure we have enough certified industrial property in our portfolio," Schwedler said.

"It takes a long time to prepare an industrial site," he said. "It's different than commercial or retail (sites) that need a 4,000 (square-foot) footprint."

Industrial and manufacturing companies need to complete an endangered species report and wetlands

SEE PENNY, PAGE A15



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PENNY FROM PAGE A14

analysis, a “whole host of due diligence. And they want that already done. ... If you haven’t done that, you’re cut.”

The footprints of Continental and others, most recently eVAC, a magnetic materials and solutions developer, “all of these wins, even down to commercial and retail to some degree, have all been as a result of prior penny passages. We had some of these projects to some degree on the 2022 referendum,” Schwedler said.

In November 2022, after passing the previous two projects lists in 2008 and 2014, the initiative failed to secure majority support by 469 votes out of a total of nearly 27,400 votes cast. More than 100 came from one precinct, a rural area bordering Florence County. More than 2,000 ballots had the referendum question blank.

“Yes, we won eVAC, but we don’t have the sites ready had we gotten the 2022 ballot,” Schwedler said. “We’ve lost two years of work.”

INDIRECT IMPACTS FOR COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT

While only two of the 30 proposed

TOP 10 INDUSTRIAL EMPLOYERS IN SUMTER COUNTY

| COMPANY | PRODUCT |
|-------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|
| Continental Tire the Americas | Passenger and light truck tires |
| Pilgrim’s Inc. | Fresh and frozen poultry |
| Becton Dickinson & Co. | Disposable blood collection devices-medical |
| Thompson Construction Group | Industrial cleaning services provider |
| Eaton Electrical | Electrical distribution equipment |
| Sylvamo | Office paper |
| Caterpillar Hydraulics | Hydraulic cylinders for heavy equipment |
| SKF | Precision bearings |
| EMS Chemie | Polymers, nylon resins and plastics |
| Sumter Packaging Corp. | Corrugated boxes and custom packaging |

Source: SumterEDGE

projects are directly related to buying or preparing property to be ready for a company to begin building, it’s all connected, Schwedler said.

Spending \$1 million on facility upgrades at Sumter Airport would allow for more taxi at a commute point often used by current and prospective industry leaders. Recreation and other quality-of-life projects entice companies to want to invest in the community.

“People want a good quality of life. Our clients, global industrial players, they appreciate our parks,” Schwedler

said. “Our tennis center is a political football because people are upset, rightly so, that our roads have potholes but we are building and paving walking trails and tennis complexes ... but the penny isn’t the fix-all for everything.”

The proposed list does include \$1.75 million for intersection safety, \$21 million for county paving and resurfacing projects, \$6 million for construction on U.S. 378, \$10 million for a state road resurfacing match, \$1.2 million for repaving on Pinewood

Road, \$1.5 million for redesign and streetscaping on Harvin Street, \$300,000 for Pinewood sidewalks and an additional \$3.5 million for community sidewalks and activity paths. The city and county do not own all the roads, so other projects can take longer if state and/or federal approval, planning and funding are required.

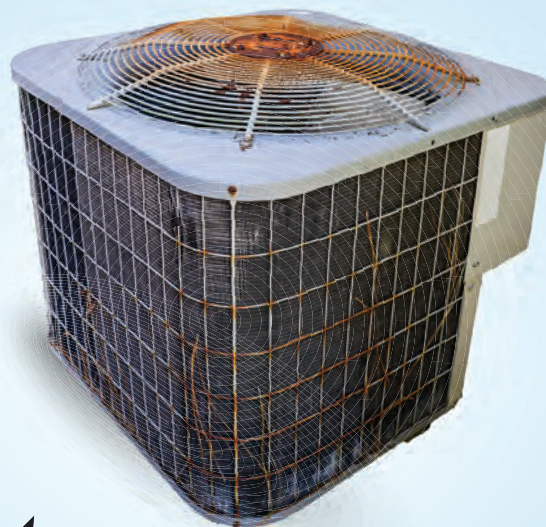
“The penny is an opportunity that is too good to pass up for all of us as a community. Not every project will appeal to every person,” Schwedler said.

He said between 32% to 46% of revenue generated from previous penny initiatives came from people who don’t live in Sumter County. It “levels the playing field” so that people passing through or visiting help fund these projects “rather than only citizens paying the tab for things that we need in the community.”

“Preparation is not driven by the goodwill of a community’s citizenry. It is driven by efforts the community makes to prepare to position the community for growth, and that is done ahead of time,” he said. “And that is why the penny is so critical. It allows us to do these projects without raising property taxes.”

TIME TO MOVE ON

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Get involved

New initiatives coming to Shepherd Center this year

New members, volunteers welcome to join group for everyone 50 and older

BY ANITA KIESLICH

Did you know the Shepherd Center of Sumter has been in our community for 42 years? Few people are aware of its existence or recognize the unique services it offers. The center is open to all those who are 50 years of age and older. It is an all-volunteer-operated nonprofit organization which offers classes, social gatherings and fellowship, lunches, recreational activities and trips to places throughout South Carolina and beyond. Annual dues are minimal.

The Shepherd Center can help you stay connected, grow your social network and keep you active. It is a known fact that spending time doing something you enjoy with people you like enhances your quality of life.

The Shepherd's Center concept and ideas for programs began with Elbert Cole in Kansas City, Missouri, when Pat Bynum and Helen Propst heard Dr. Cole's ideas. They returned to Sumter, and in 1982, Bynum, Propst and 11 sponsoring churches opened its doors at Trinity United Methodist Church. Mary Garland Roddey was elected its first director, and from that day forward, the center has provided services to more than 15,000 seniors. However, in the last five years, many residents have forgotten what the Shepherd Center has to offer, and the COVID-19 pandemic caused huge reductions in membership. With new life and a strong commitment, it is now time to rejoin the center and find the activity that excites you. Jeanette Rivera-Smith, volunteer director, has been at the helm for 16 years, and with her board of 10, they expect to revitalize the organization with your help.

Adventures in Learning is just one focus of the program. It provides an array of classes, such as gardening and flower arrangements, crafts, exercise, current events, retirement planning and health information. Anyone



The Shepherd Center in Sumter offers weekly meals for older adults on Thursdays after Adventures in Learning classes.

RIGHT: A group from the Shepherd Center traveled to Boston recently to visit the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum.

with talent who would like to volunteer in an activity is welcomed; classes are usually held each Thursday for eight weeks. After the Adventure in Learning classes, lunches are offered each Thursday followed with fun entertainment, games or special speakers.

Recreation is available based on your interest. For example, if you enjoy eating out, weekly lunches are arranged. If you like bowling or pickleball, groups are formed, and if games are your choice, then you will find them at the Shepherd's Center. Of course, there are always line dancing

SEE **CENTER**, PAGE A17



PHOTOS PROVIDED

CENTER FROM PAGE A16

and exercise classes as part of Adventures in Learning.

Because travel is often difficult for older residents, both day trips and long tours are available. The day trips include visits within a two-

hour radius (the Statehouse, Mepkin Abbey, Billy Graham Museum, Francis Marion Planetarium, Brookgreen Gardens) where you get to learn more about your state while enjoying fellowship and a delicious lunch. Longer trips provide you a climate-controlled coach while visiting specific areas of the United

States. Some highlights have been four to seven days in Asheville, Savannah, New York City, the Amish country, Vermont, Boston and Niagara Falls.

Long-time members have voiced accolades about the center and encourage others to join. With the 2024-25 program year, new initia-

tives are being implemented, making it easier for participation and hopefully volunteerism. Anyone interested in learning more about the Shepherd's Center is asked to pick up a newsletter at Sumter County Library, Parks and Recreation Center, Swan Lake Gardens or at many local churches.

Summer fun also offered for Sumter's older adults

BY SARAH SONNTAG

sarah@theitem.com

Summer is the time to have fun and stay busy.

However, about a quarter of American seniors suffer from loneliness and social isolation — the very factors that seriously impact their mental health, according to the World Health Organization. Older adults are at an increased risk of depression, anxiety and dementia under prolonged periods of isolation, which is why as the summer progresses it is important to keep in mind how we can keep our older loved ones active and engaged. Luckily, Sumter offers various programs tailored just for them.

SUMTER SENIOR SERVICES

Sumter Senior Services, at 119 S. Sumter St., offers a variety of programs and activity spaces year 'round for older adults who are members of the center. According to Gail Wilson, executive director of SSS, the center is open five days a week, and people can visit four hours each day. The center offers an exercise program, crochet group, daily devotions and a pool room. Monthly trips are hosted to fun locations, including shopping malls or farmers markets around or near Sumter. People ages 60 and over who are not members of the center can also participate in the exercise and art and crafts programs or use the exercise room independently. For more information on programs or to join Sumter Senior Services, call (803) 773-5508.

YMCA OF SUMTER

The YMCA, at 510 Miller Road, offers the SilverSneakers program for people 65 years and older. This is an easy,



slow-paced workout program for those who want to stay in shape this summer. It runs every week from Monday to Thursday at 11:15 a.m. Members of this program can apply for a SilverSneaker membership, which some insurances will pay for. The Active Older Adult program, which offers activities such as Bible study and movie nights, is paused for the summer but will resume in the fall.

HOPE CENTERS

All three Sumter HOPE Centers have opportunities and programs tailored for older adults this summer.

North HOPE Center, at 904 N. Main St., offers aerobics on Mondays and Fridays from 8 to 9 a.m., according to Wayne Russ, assistant manager at the center. On Monday, the program features chair aerobics that aid mobility and strength with the chair acting as

balance support. On Friday, seniors can participate in line dancing and other aerobic exercises. More activities include crocheting and jewelry making on the first and second Tuesday of every month, bingo on the third Tuesday and either card playing, crocheting or jewelry making on the fourth Tuesday. All Tuesday activities are held from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. The center also offers pickleball for visitors of all ages from 9:30 a.m. to noon every Tuesday and 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. every Wednesday.

Birnie HOPE Center, at 210 S. Purdy St., hosts a senior quilting and crocheting class every Tuesday and Thursday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m., according to Leon Myer, assistant manager of the center. It also has extended hours for summer pickleball, offered to all ages, on Monday and Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

South HOPE Center, at 125 S. Lafayette Drive, holds crocheting classes every Wednesday from 1 to 4 p.m., according to Tyrone Nixon, manager at the center. It also offers two activities for those interested in games, one of them a card group that meets every Tuesday and Thursday from 12:30 to 4 p.m. The other game group is a triominos group, which plays the variation of dominoes every Monday at 12:30 p.m.

SUMTER COUNTY RECREATION AND PARKS DEPARTMENT

While the department does not offer programs strictly for older adults during the summer, it does offer a fan favorite, pickleball, hosted every Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. at 155 Haynsworth St. in the gymnasium. The department offers senior-specific programs between the fall and spring that will return Monday, Aug. 5.

Religion

Our presence is worth more than our words

How often do you encounter someone in your life struggling? It might be every day or it might be every week, but I am fairly certain each of us knows people in our life who are hurting. They may have a minor setback in their lives, like a temporary illness or a disappointment with a situation at their place of employment. But some who are hurting in our lives are facing much larger challenges, like a terminal illness or the loss



Pastor Stewart Rawson

of someone they loved dearly. When we confront someone who is struggling, it is human nature to want to say something to let them know we care. Our hope is that our words will comfort them in some small way. My conviction is that often what we say is not helpful. In fact, sometimes our words might even do damage. Kate Bowler is a professor at Duke University, and several years ago she authored a helpful book called *Everything Happens for a Reason: And Other Lies I Have Loved.* Dr. Bowler

was diagnosed with stage four colon cancer when she was in her early 30s and her young son was 2 years old. In her book, she tells stories of things people said to her and her husband that were meant for good but were not received that way. One of her stories is of her husband greeting someone at the door who brought a casserole for the family. When the well-intentioned neighbor is walking away, they comment to her husband, "You know, everything happens for a reason!" Not meaning to be ungrateful but overcome by pain, he responds, "Well, I wish I knew what the reason was!"

It is one thing to believe God has a plan for our lives and for our world. It is quite a different thing to use that belief as a means of explaining someone else's circumstance.

Kate Bowler's sincere and thoughtful guide led us to a theme for our summer preaching series titled, "Things We Say We Aren't Sure We Mean." In exploring these phrases, we discuss how we should focus more on being present with someone in a time of need rather than always thinking we must have the right words to say. Not every quiet moment needs to be filled with our "words of wisdom." As a minister friend of mine once said, "The only thing you have to say to someone is 'I came as soon as I heard!'" The gift of our presence with them, our sincerity, is worth more than we can say.

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

Meet the Moms of Sumter Addicts Prayer Group

BY SARAH SONNTAG
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In 2022, nearly 60% of Americans over the age of 12 used illicit drugs, alcohol or tobacco products within the previous month, according to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Of this group, nearly 20% reported having a substance abuse disorder within the last year.

With the prevalence of such diseases, it is important to remember substance abuse disorders are not only physically and mentally difficult for those suffering with them, but also their loved ones who wish to see them safe and happy.

That is why Kristen Morgan founded Moms of Sumter Addicts, or MOSA Prayer Group.

Morgan, a mother of four, moved to Sumter six years ago. Freshly in a new

location, she was shocked to learn that two of her sons were struggling with drug and alcohol addictions. Feeling alone in her realization and with "zero support system," Morgan searched for support in her church and the local Alcoholics Anonymous (Al-Anon) family group for nearly three years, but she realized what she personally needed most was not yet available in Sumter — a group specifically for mothers of addicts.

"It just hit a point where I was like, 'I need moms' because when you go [to Al-Anon], it can be for any family or friend, and I just started seeing the different dynamic between having a spouse who is an alcoholic versus being a mom," she explained. "That's kind of how the group started."

Morgan emphasized MOSA is not a place to complain or speak badly about



SEE **MOSA**, PAGE A19

PHOTO PROVIDED

MOSA FROM PAGE A18

family members. It is a place to share the ups and downs of having a child who is addicted, thanking God for all victories — both big and small — in their child's recovery and asking for His guidance along the way.

"I believe God can change things, and He often does," Morgan explained.

MOSA prayer group met for the first time in February with one member and has steadily grown since. The whole group meets the second Thursday of every month from 5:30 to 6:30 p.m. at the Birnie HOPE Center at 210 S. Purdy St.

Holding the meetings at the HOPE Center rather than a specific church prevents those looking to attend meetings or join the group from feeling excluded.

"I want any mother of any age, of any race, of any denomination [to join the group]," Morgan said.

Morgan emphasized MOSA is for prayer but also for bonding outside of the group as well. Sometimes, people are afraid to share their struggles with their children's disorders with people who might not understand. The group aims to build a support network of women living through similar situations, Morgan explained.

"My biggest thing is you're not alone. This whole [group] came from my perception that I was alone," she said. "It's a hard journey, and just knowing that there are other people there, too, it just makes it a little easier."

Anyone interested in joining Mothers of Sumter Addicts can simply show up to a meeting or email mosa.prayer@gmail.com. There is no membership cost.



Sumter Opera House to appear on big screen in September in 5th 'God's Not Dead' installment

BY DEIRDRE CURRIN

deirdre@theitem.com

If you watch "God's Not Dead: In God We Trust," coming to theaters Sept. 12, you might see something or someone familiar.

Earlier this year, 400 people from Sumter and surrounding states answered the call to be extras in the filming of parts of the movie at Sumter's own opera house. This fall they will be able to see their hard work come to fruition in theaters.

The fifth installment of the "God's Not Dead" franchise will center on politics, as the Rev. David "Dave" Hill, played by actor and producer David A.R. White, fights to keep religion in public policy by running against an old enemy in a battle for office.

According to earlier reporting from *The Item*, producer Brenton Earley, alongside producers Michael Scott, Shawn Broskie, White and director Vance Null, shared that Sumter Opera House is what made Sumter a prized location to film.

The historic opera house was the backdrop for a congressional debate between Hill and antagonist Robert Benson, played by William Forsythe. South Carolina natives may recognize other pieces of scenery in the film from Rock Hill and Fort Mill, plus some surrounding areas where the movie was filmed.

The American Christian drama series focuses on Hill as he argues the reality of God through various occurrences in modern society, and the main characters are meant to present proof of their beliefs, according to earlier reporting. This film stars White; Ray Wise, best known for his role as Leland Palmer in "Twin Peaks"; Samaira Armstrong, who appeared on "The O.C."; Australian Christian rock band Newsboys; former Arkansas Gov. Mike Huckabee; Isaiah Washington,



PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

Parts of "God's Not Dead: In God We Trust," the fifth installment in the movie series, were filmed at Sumter Opera House on Tuesday, April 16, using hundreds of Sumter locals as audience member extras in the background of a debate scene.



who played Dr. Burke on "Grey's Anatomy"; Scott Baio, who starred on "Happy Days" and "Charles in Charge"; Dean Cain, who played Clark Kent/Superman in "Lois & Clark: The New Adventures of Su-

perman"; and Ted McGinley, who starred in "Married With Children."

Of the five films already a part of the "God's Not Dead" series, this is the only one to feature South Carolina, not to mention Sumter.

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PHOTOS PROVIDED

From left: In the front row, Sumter Cruisers Classic Car Club members are Bobby Porter, Larry Brunson, Tommy Hickson, David Marcella with his wife, Andrea, behind him, Bobby Beatson Sr., Jerry Brunson, John Tuttle and John Coward, with his wife, Hilda, behind him. In the back are Harold Hodge, Dan Daniel, Buddy Avin, Kenny McInnis, Michael Avin, Jim Richardson, Mark Hodges, Mike Staley and William Baker. The club started in 1997 for the group to share their love of classic cars. It has nonprofit status and gives back to Sumter United Ministries, Sumter Fireside Fund and pregnancy centers. It hosts two formal car shows each year.

Take a ride with Sumter Cruisers Classic Car Club



BY SARAH SONNTAG
sarah@theitem.com

The first cars ever made hit the roads in the late 1800s. They were, and still are, a topic of great fascination for many people, whether it be about their design, speed or technology.

In order to fuel this fascination and bring together car enthusiasts, the first major American car show was hosted by Automobile Club of America in 1900 at New York City's Madison Square Garden, according to the New England Auto Museum. Since then, car clubs have revved up across the nation for car enthusiasts to meet and show off the latest innovations in car technology or commemorate and upkeep cars of the past. One such club was created in Sumter al-

most 30 years ago.

The Sumter Cruisers Classic Car Club was the first of its kind in Sumter, founded in 1997 by a small group of classic car enthusiasts. The original founders include Dave Marcella, Tommy Smith, Larry Brunson, John Coward and Jesse Robertson, according to Bobby Beatson Jr., current president of the club.

"The reason for the original founding of the club was to give car enthusiasts, especially classic car enthusiasts, a way to show their cars and to have a meeting place," Beatson Jr. said.

A passion for classic cars may have brought the group together, but their bonds are deeper than that. Many members are deeply invested, lifelong members, such as the late Jack Sanders and the late Kenneth McInnis Sr. Their wives, Debbie Sanders and Brenda McInnis, respectively, still frequent

SEE **CRUISERS**, PAGE A23



CRUISERS

FROM PAGE A22

the club meetings because of the tight connections they built with members through the years, according to Beatson Jr. He explained he really wanted to honor these committed, lifelong members for all they have done with the club.

“I wanted to make sure that I honored these guys before it was too late ... a lot of these guys are in their upper 70s and lower 80s, and they still love [the cars and club]. It’s something that you can do right on up to your old

[age].”

The club still holds close to its roots, hosting several meetings and events year 'round. From April to October, the club hosts “cruise-ins” at Wesmark Plaza on the fourth Saturday of each month. Beatson explained cruise-ins are for “people that have old cars, and we just line the cars up and let people come by and look at them, and we sit out in the parking lot and talk.” Also, on the second Thursday of each month, club members meet at Second Mill Restaurant to enjoy company, chat about cars and other shared interests and take prayer requests.

Cars are not the only concern of this club, though. The club is a nonprofit that donates 100% of the proceeds earned through membership fees, sponsorships, 50/50 raffles and more to local charities including Sumter United Ministries, local pregnancy centers and the Fireside Fund. According to Beatson Jr., the club was able to donate about \$1,500 to the trio of charities in 2023, totaling \$4,500 in donations.

The club has an upcoming car show hosted outside of Willie Sue’s, at 3355 Patriot Pkwy., on Oct. 19. This is one of two car shows annually hosted by

the club; the other is held at the Striped Bass Festival in Manning. However, this year’s October car show will be a little different, Beatson Jr. said.

Generally showcasing classic cars from the 1960s-'70s or late-model muscle and exotic cars, the club plans to expand membership and welcome motorcycles and imported cars to the upcoming car show, according to Beatson Jr.

“We’re just trying to keep the sport alive,” Beatson Jr. expressed.

If you are interested in joining the club or visiting a car show, visit Sumter Cruisers on Facebook.



Entertainment

Arrival of Deadpool and Wolverine in Marvel Cinematic Universe

After the release of the first "Iron Man" in 2008, the Marvel Cinematic Universe gradually became a blockbuster juggernaut, with every film outing being critical to box office success. Unfortunately, as of late, quantity over quality appears to have become their new motto, while there are worse films deserving of severe polarizing from fans and critics alike.

The last few releases from Marvel/Disney as part of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, while not overly brilliant or memorable, I can say without hesitation there is no regret from watching those films. Aside from less-than-stellar box-office returns, not all is hopeless from the world of Marvel. For the first time, fans are going to witness the characters Deadpool and Wolverine entering the Marvel Cinematic Universe on the big screen. I never thought this specific combination would come to fruition in my lifetime.

Knowing that, on July 26, it will be a treat seeing two iconic entities interact with established characters in the same universe. And to think, Deadpool's initial cinematic outing did not even happen. Ryan Reynolds remained with his passion project during its status remaining in developmental limbo. In 2014, an unknown insider within the entertainment industry leaked computer-generated/animated test footage of an exciting action sequence featuring Deadpool. The footage generated acclaim from both fans, critics and general audiences alike.

The positive reception to the leaked footage prompted Fox Studios into shepherding Deadpool into the world of live action. Reynolds' passion received life in an unexpected fashion, whereas other initially enthusiastic actors vacate a project after years of a story remaining in limbo. Deadpool's concept offers a unique perspective into the world of a self-aware comic book character acknowledging his fictional status and audiences peeking

into the mind of an unstable mercenary, recognizing various popular culture references with Deadpool constantly breaking the fourth wall.

Where "Deadpool" differed from the standard comic book film affair is the complete embrace of his chaotic mindset, highlighting over-the-top, bloody violence, pervasive profanity and adult innuendos that only teenagers and adults are overly familiar with. Reynolds channels his natural charisma and comedic timing that made him a memorable talent based on his performances in National Lampoon's "Van Wilder," "Waiting," "Harold and Kumar Go to White Castle" and "The Change-Up." His voice, mannerisms and physical presence are a perfect fit for the character of Deadpool.



A REVIEW BY
ISAIAH RIDLEY

Deadpool's first film explores his origin tale as a mercenary diagnosed with cancer. As he becomes desperate for a cure, he enters a secret government program known as Weapon X. The experiment goes awry, causing the cancer to mutate even worse, disfiguring his physical appearance while granting him a nonstop healing factor. Wade Wilson/Deadpool begins a hysterical journey of breaking the fourth wall dialogue, and interactions filled with chaotic comic book violence served as a revenge story.

The second film follows a similar formula with an expanded list of characters appearing, introducing time-traveling elements, branching the universe into multiverse world. Adding to the excitement is Hugh Jackman returning to the role of Wolverine after initially retiring from the role after 2017's "Logan." The live-action depiction of Wolverine officially entered a realm, and it will be a jarring experience watching another actor attempt to replace Jackman. I view it as like Robert Downey Jr. as Tony Stark/Iron Man. No one else can, will or should play the character, as the role belongs to him exclusively. Like Wolverine/Logan belongs to Jackman, given he has played the character



KGC-324-RC / STAR MAX / IPX

Hugh Jackman, Ryan Reynolds, Emma Corrin and Shawn Levy at a fan event for "Deadpool & Wolverine" on Sunday, July 7, in Berlin, Germany.

since the year 2000.

The beautiful element of "Deadpool and Wolverine" is the overall acceptance of adapting comic book-accurate costumes, fully investing in bright color schemes and furthermore giving fans an experience they have consistently yearned for ever since comic book films became fashionable. Plot details have remained very secretive surrounding the actual synopsis of "Deadpool and Wolverine." However, one fact is the excitement, curiosity and anticipation for the film are at a fever pitch with two characters making their debut in the Marvel Cinematic Universe. For the first time in my experience, there is an element of the unknown with this feature. Teasers and trailers have not offered much in the way of spoiling key scenes. I have to say there is sincere excitement in not knowing what to expect.

The combination of an unstable, humorous Deadpool interacting with an intense, brooding, gruff exterior and interior character of Wolverine in the vein of a buddy cop concept as a

comic book adaptation shall be a cinematic treat for fans and the general audience. I will say the Marvel timeline is quite chaotic with a massive story to catch up on in terms of storytelling and character exposition. My recommendation is to watch all the "X-Men" films, all three "Wolverine" adaptations and of course the last two "Deadpools." Those cinematic outings should at least provide a degree of understanding for those not overly familiar with the overall storyline.

I purchased my ticket early for the opening night of "Deadpool and Wolverine." To say that I am fully looking forward to the experience would be an understatement. "Deadpool," "Deadpool II" and "Logan" changed the perspective on how to approach these types of stories without watering down any of the initial carnage. Be prepared for the arrival of "Deadpool and Wolverine" on July 26.

To watch Isaiah Ridley's movie reviews online, find him @Izzy's Cinematic Escape on YouTube.

What to do

School may be starting soon, but a Jeep show, giant yard sale, burger cookoff and much more will round out summer events

SUMTER

Fourth Fridays continues for 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 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.

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. Learn more about the event at <https://Krawlinforchrist.wixsite.com/my-site-1>.

Join The Live in the Flesh Experience for a night of good vibes and throwback music at the **'90s Jammy Jam Party** on Aug. 9-10 from 8 p.m. that Friday through 2 a.m. that Saturday morning. Once you've bought your tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/3z-28by5w>, join the party at Catchall Masonic Lodge, 3280 Peach Orchard Road, Dalzell.

The **Palmetto Optimist Club's Burger Cookoff** event returns to downtown Sumter's Rotary Plaza on Sept. 14 from 2 to 7 p.m. for the third year to help raise money for families battling childhood cancer, and the club is looking for people to sign up to compete or be-

come a sponsor. Teams interested in participating can email PalmettoOptimistClub@gmail.com for details. Teams will compete in two categories, People's Choice and Judges' Choice. Everything will help support Children's Cancer Partners of the Carolinas, with the money raised going to children in Sumter and Clarendon battling cancer. Visit www.palmettooptimistclub.com/s-projects-basic for more about the event and to sign up to participate.

CLARENDON

The **Joanne W. Charles Memorial Annual Charity Golf Tournament** will be held on Saturday, Aug. 10, at Santee Cooper Country Club, 630 Santee Drive, Santee. Shotgun start is at 9 a.m., and the cost is \$75 per player or \$300 per team. There will be prizes for closest to the pin and longest drive, plus a putting contest. Register online at Charitygolftoday.com/jwcsantee. Contact Kenneth Johnson for more about the tournament at info@jwcmemorial.org or (803) 410-0976.

Find a few new-to-you treasures at the annual **Clarendon Club Giant Community Yard Sale** on Saturday, Aug. 3, starting at 8 a.m. Vendor and household spaces are available, and there will be deals and treasures for everyone. Catch the sale at 1219 Dingle Pond Road. For more information, email ccweddingsandevents@outlook.com or call (803) 478-2010. Sign up to be a vendor at <https://tinyurl.com/2hk5t2wr>.

Hear plenty of beautiful gospel music at the **Gospel Sensationals – 21st Anniversary** event on Saturday, Aug. 3. Earthquake Entertainment presents the show, with The McDuffies, The Gospel Legends, Ernest Pearson & The Singing Disciples, Justified, The National JRS, The McClary Sisters, The Heavenly Stars, Sons of Faith, Heavenly Angels and Cedric Bennett and Company. Doors will open at 4 p.m., and the program starts at 5 p.m. Advance tickets are \$15 or \$20 at the door. Children under 12 can attend for free. Buy tickets at Bennett's Oil Change, 102 N. Boundary St., Manning. The event will be held at Manning Junior High School, 1101 WL Hamilton Road. For more information, call (864) 525-0625.

Add the **End of Summer** concert to your calendar for Thursday, Sept. 12. The downtown Manning concert organized by the City of Manning will start at 6:30 p.m. and last until 8:30 p.m. Email ctrebil@cityofmanning.org or call (803) 435-8477 for more information.

LEE COUNTY

Hop aboard the whisper-quiet, open-air tour vehicle and explore the park along the historic Loop Road in Lee State Park on Saturday, Aug. 3 and Aug. 24. **Guided tram tour** guests will visit historic points of interest while keeping an eye out and ears open for park wildlife like white-tailed deer, many species of birds and turtles out and about on the park. Each tour runs



EVENTS FROM PAGE A25

from 10 a.m. to noon and costs \$10 per person. Wear clothing appropriate for the weather and also for riding on a 15mph open-air tram, water and bug repellent. Binoculars, camera, sunglasses and a hat are optional. Registration deadline is one day before the program. Limited seating is available. Book your seats at <https://tinyurl.com/4ybd57s5>, then fill out the form at <https://forms.office.com/r/86pLRh204z>. Meet at the Environmental Education Center.

COLUMBIA

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.thebook-butler.com/events.

Enjoy a five-course meal at a **Beer Dinner** to help support Folds of Honor of the Palmetto State, which awards scholarships to the spouses and children of fallen and disabled military veterans. The dinner will start at 6:30 p.m. on Thursday, Aug. 1, at Steel Hands Brewing, 2350 Foreman St., Cayce. Buy your tickets in person in the taproom with a bartender or call Baylee Richter, (803) 260-2985.

Repticon returns to Columbia on Aug. 3-4. There will be a mixture of vendors and breeders at this family oriented, fun-filled event for everyone to learn about animals not normally seen in local pet stores. Shop for a new family pet among the hundreds of reptiles, amphibians, invertebrates, arachnids and small exotic animals. You can also buy cages, supplies and both live and frozen feeders, and get expert advice about caring for the new pet. Repticon will be held at the Jamil Temple, 206 Jamil Road, Columbia, on Saturday, Aug. 3, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and

Sunday, Aug. 4, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. Tickets are sold online only: \$15 Super Ticket (entry for both days), \$12 Saturday (all day), \$10 Saturday after 1 p.m., \$12 Sunday (all day), \$6 for children 5-12, and children 4 and under are admitted free. To buy tickets or for more information about the show, visit <https://repticon.com/south-carolina/columbia>.

Learn more about the culture of the Latin community through the **Main Street Latin Festival** on Saturday, Aug. 24, on the 1300 and 1400 blocks of Main Street in downtown Columbia. Explore the culture through food, art, dance and music at this fun event for the whole family. Hear salsa, merengue, reggaeton and gruperio music, watch folkloric dancers and find delicious Latin foods to try. The free festival will be Aug. 24 from 11 a.m. until 10 p.m.

Get a jump on some holiday shopping and find the perfect decor for your home at the **Midlands Fall Arts and Crafts Market** on Sept. 14 from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Sept. 15 from noon to 4 p.m. Admission and parking are

free at the South Carolina State Farmers Market, 3483 Charleston Highway. The Midlands Crafters Association says it will have unique vendors and something for every visitor.

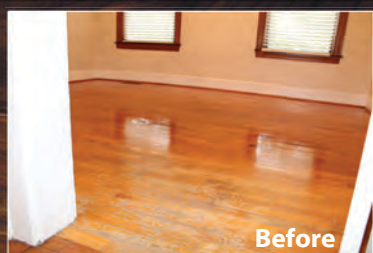
FLORENCE

Find vintage and secondhand items, decor, clothing, crafts, jewelry, handmade items, flowers, food and music at the **Round Town Vintage and Handmade Market** on Saturday, July 27, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. Local makers, artisans and vintage/secondhand curators will be there. The market will be in the green space area surrounded by local restaurants Bean Bar Coffee, Buddy's Burgers, Local Motive, Thai Local +King Jefe Sushi, 2519 W. Palmetto St., Florence.

Enjoy an outside rodeo with entertainment and music by DJ PAYME and DJ B-LORD on Aug. 3-4. **RNB+-Southern Soul Birthday Rodeo** starts at 8 p.m. and lasts through 1 a.m. at the Florence Fairgrounds, 5526 E. Palmetto St., Florence.

SEE EVENTS, PAGE A27

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EVENTS FROM PAGE A26

Enjoy an outside rodeo with entertainment and music by DJ PAYME and DJ B-LORD on Aug. 3-4. **RNB+Southern Soul Birthday Rodeo** starts at 8 p.m. and lasts through 1 a.m. at the Florence Fairgrounds, 5526 E. Palmetto St., Florence.

Florence **RaceFest at the Market** will be held at the Pee Dee State Farmers Market on Saturday, Aug. 31, from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. The Pee Dee State Farmers Market is at 2513 W. Lucas St., Florence. All are welcome to this free event to kick off Race Weekend. There will be games, activities, arts and crafts, food, and family friendly fun, including Cozy Coupe Races, the Kenny Shelley Memorial Auto Fair and Acceleration Zone, where you can touch and see racing vehicles up close.

UPSTATE

The **South Carolina Bigfoot Festival** is returning to Westminster on Oct. 11-12. Since 2019, thousands of people descend on this small town during the month of October to celebrate and learn about the most well know myste-

rious creature in the world – Bigfoot! People from all over the United States have come to the festival since 2019 and many have returned every year.

Whether or not you believe in the Big Fella, you will have fun listening to expert Bigfoot researchers, tapping your feet to live music, participating in or watching the multiple contests, or perusing the many vendors up and down Main Street Westminster. Vendors may apply to participate by going to www.scbigfootfestival.com or emailing scbigfootfestival@hotmail.com.

AMUSEMENT PARKS

The YMCA of Columbia opened its **water parks** for summer 2024, one in Orangeburg and one in Santee. The Santee Water Park, 1761 Bass Drive, Santee, SC 29142, is open Fridays and Sundays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. The Or-

angeburg Water Park, 2550 St. Matthews Road, Orangeburg, SC 29118, is open Thursdays and Saturdays from 11 a.m. to 7 p.m. Admission is \$10 for those 48 inches and above and \$5 for those 47 inches and below. Free for YMCA of Columbia members. Both parks offer family fun slides, zero-depth pools, tot pools, lazy river, slides and spray features, group pavilions and snack bars. If you have any questions, contact the Orangeburg County YMCA at (803) 268-9622.

Carowinds has announced the lineup for its Carowinds Summer Music Fest Amplified

by Coke Studio. The fest also features performances by regional bands and emerging artists throughout the park, including 10 acts performing in-park, showcasing a mix of Nashville recording artists and Carolina talent.

— Friday, July 26: Brett Young with Restless Road

— Saturday, July 27: Brantley Gilbert with Lauren Alaina

— Friday, Aug. 2: Skillet with 10 Years

— Saturday, Aug. 3: Sugar Ray, Better Than Ezra and Tonic

— Friday, Aug. 9: Flo Rida with Blanco Brown

— Saturday, Aug. 10: Russell Dickerson with Tyler Rich

The Carowinds Summer Music Fest is free with park admission. Season passholders can enjoy all performances as part of their pass benefits.

For the latest updates on the Carowinds Summer Music Fest, including performance schedules, visit Carowinds.com. Carowinds, a 400-acre amusement park located on the North Carolina-South Carolina state line, is home to top-rated roller coasters, including Fury 325, the world's tallest and fastest giga coaster, as well as more than 58 rides, attractions, and live stage shows. Carolina Harbor, a 26-acre water park, features a variety of water slides, wave pools, large play structures and a three-acre children's play area. For information on attractions and accommodations at Carowinds, visit www.carowinds.com or call (704) 588-2600.



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The Bobbys celebrates the best in Sumter-area sports with *Item's* 2nd award show downtown

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

The Sumter Item hosted its second-annual sports awards show, The Bobbys, on Thursday, June 20. The best local athletes flooded to the Sumter Opera House for a night of celebration. While there were award winners, the night was about reminiscing on a spectacular year of athletics more than any individual honor.



An event like this needs some help, of course. On top

of the excellent athletes, sponsors like Thompson Construction, Simpson Hardware and Sporting Goods, Hines Furniture, Wright Way Plumbing and Sumter Trophy and Engraving make events like this possible. J. O'Grady also provided some exquisite memorabilia for the stage, which gave us the chance to recognize the stars of the past and present as we celebrated our current crop of high school standouts.

The event could only begin in one way, as the show's namesake, Bobby Richardson, took the stage after introductions.

"Thanks to *The Item* for doing this. It's humbling when they name an award after you," Richardson said.



PHOTOS BY MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sumter High School's girls basketball team accepts the award for Best Team during The Bobbys award show June 20.

WINNERS OF THE BOBBYS 2024

Best Team — Sumter High girls basketball

Best Male Athlete — Clark Kinney, Wilson Hall

Best Female Athlete — Lyza Prickelmyer, Laurence Manning

Best Coach — Demetress Adams-Ludd, East Clarendon

Best Soccer Player — Jacen Krammer, Thomas Sumter

Best Volleyball Player — Rylee Bath, Wilson Hall

Best Baseball Player — Caleb Coker, East Clarendon

Best Softball Player — Kayleigh Parmenter-Avins, Laurence Manning

Best Girls Track and Field Athlete — Molly Jones, Wilson Hall

Best Boys Track and Field Athlete — Quinton Dais, Lakewood

Best Boys Cross Country Athlete — Caulder Williamson, Wilson Hall

Best Girls Cross Country Athlete — Molly Smith, Sumter High

Best Boys Basketball Player — Teon Tindal, Crestwood

Best Girls Basketball Player — Kiara Croskey, Sumter High

Best Football Player — Javion Martin, Crestwood

Thompson Award for Courage — Summer Golston, Crestwood

Hines Furniture Athlete of the Year — Kiara Croskey, Sumter High

BOBBYS FROM PAGE A30

“I’m honored here tonight because we’re honoring the best athletes that have come to Sumter from the various high schools. I can’t wait to watch who comes up and see what they have to say.”

Richardson shared memories of recently lost legends both local and from afar. The former Yankee second baseman faced off with Hall of Famer Willie Mays and recounted their World Series matchup, noting that Mays told him that his Giants would’ve taken the series from the Yankees had Mays been the lead runner on his own late double that instead left a crucial run on third. He also shared memories of Tommy Jones, whom we lost just before the event. The pair are forever tied with South Carolina baseball and as pillars of the Sumter baseball community.

The namesake of the show also shared a poem that is familiar to anyone who has heard Richardson speak but is always a delight to hear.

“Your name may not appear down here in this world’s Hall of Fame. In fact, you may be so unknown that no one knows your name,” started Richardson. “The honors, the flashbulbs may pass you by and neon bulbs of blue, but if you know and love the Lord, then I have news for you. This Hall of Fame is only good as long as time shall be. But keep in mind, God’s Hall of Fame is for eternity. This crowd on earth, they soon forget the heroes of the past. They cheer like mad until you fall, and that’s how long you last.

“But in God’s Hall of Fame, just for believing in his son, inscribed you’ll find your name. I’ll tell you, friend, I wouldn’t trade my name, however small, that’s written there beyond the stars in that celestial hall. For any famous name on Earth or glory that they share, I’d rather be unknown here and have my name up there.”

Later in the evening, former Clemson and NFL defensive back Dexter Davis gave an impassioned speech to encourage the next generation about how to be a champion, using his C.H.A.M.P.I.O.N. ministries as a touchstone.

“I’ve been all over the world, Clemson University ... I went and played in the National Football League for six years, I was the chaplain with the Atlanta Falcons, and it wasn’t because of anything up here,” he said while



Dexter Davis speaks at The Bobbys on Thursday, June 20.



Sumter icon Bobby Richardson speaks at the award show named in his honor at the Sumter Opera House.

pointing at his head before putting his hand to his heart to say, “It’s because of what’s in here and who I serve.”

But the night was truly about the student-athletes that were welcomed on stage throughout the evening. Sumter High’s Kiara Croskey opened the night, as she was named the Hines Furniture Athlete of the Year. She was back on stage midway through the show, as she was named the Best Girls

Basketball Player. Croskey was then joined by her Sumter High teammates, as they were named Best Team after winning the SCHSL 5A state title, to close out the show.

The night was a great encapsulation of the great athletes from both SCHSL and SCISA schools. The best Male and Female Athletes both hailed from SCISA programs, as Wilson Hall baseball and football star Clark Kinney

earned the male honor, while Laurence Manning basketball and softball standout Lyza Prickelmyer earned the female honor. East Clarendon’s Demetress Adams-Ludd was recognized as the top coach after leading an incredible turnaround with the Lady Wolverines’ basketball team. Sumter School District had winners from all three schools, as did East Clarendon. Wilson Hall, Laurence Manning and Thomas Sumter all took home honors on the SCISA side.

The Thompson Award for Courage was one of the highlights of the evening, as Crestwood’s Summer Golston was recognized. The senior cheerleader lost her home in a fire in December but never missed a beat thanks to the support of the CHS community. She was still on the sidelines cheering and graduated in May.

We hope this is just the beginning for The Bobbys. Hopefully, it will continue to expand. This season we added Best Soccer Player as a step toward growth, and we will keep trying to find new ways to celebrate the extraordinary athletes in the tri-county.

PHOTOS BY MICAH GREEN / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sports

Former Lakewood High star Cisse is ready for big sophomore season at N.C. State

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

When Brandon Cisse walked in the door at North Carolina State, he wanted to hit the ground running.

For many freshmen, the first season of college football is a year of transition. A lot of freshmen take a red-shirt season as they learn what it takes to be a college athlete and the skill required to be successful.

Cisse wasn't content with taking a year to learn. He was ready to prove he was talented enough to be an ACC defensive back. The former Lakewood star got his wish.

The former Gator played in every game for N.C. State as a freshman on both defense and special teams. Now, he's ready to springboard his way into a stellar sophomore season.

"It did kinda, in some ways, exceed expectations. In some ways, I wish I had been more productive on the football," Cisse said. "Being able to play as a true freshman and play every game, that was a big thing. To be the only true freshman to play on this defense last year is something that I take a lot of pride in. I'm obviously looking to carry it over into this year, but I thought towards the second half of last year I was one of the best true freshmen on defense in the country, and I'm a lot better as a player now, so I can't wait to see what this season looks like."

Last season was still certainly a year of transition, as Cisse learned the hard way just how different ACC football is from SCHSL 3A.

"The biggest thing that I wish I would've known is that the physicality and the speed of the game is a lot different," he said. "You're going against a top team every week, and everyone is just as talented. I just wish I had my



PHOTO BY GREGG FORWERCK FOR N.C. STATE ATHLETICS

Former Lakewood standout Brandon Cisse (25) talks with his N.C. State teammates between plays against Marshall on Saturday, Oct. 7, 2023.

'... I thought towards the second half of last year I was one of the best true freshmen on defense in the country, and I'm a lot better as a player now, so I can't wait to see what this season looks like.'

BRANDON CISSE

Sophomore defensive back at N.C. State

head on a little bit better at times, but it happens. I'm definitely more prepared for it now."

Cisse also discovered the challenge

that nearly every college freshman runs into, regardless of being an athlete.

"Time management" Cisse said of the biggest adjustment he had to make

last year. "You're more on your own, you have a lot more time on your hands, and there's no one here watching you. Time management is probably the main thing I would say to someone; just make sure you have all your ducks lined up and be ready to go."

Luckily, Cisse had some veterans who were willing to help a young freshman along the way. Two players were instrumental in his success. Payton Wilson, the standout linebacker who was selected by the Pittsburgh Steelers in the third round of the NFL Draft this spring, and fellow cornerback Ayden White both took Cisse under

SEE CISSE, PAGE A33



LEFT: Former Lakewood standout and current N.C. State defensive back Brandon Cisse drops back in coverage against Kansas State during the Pop Tarts Bowl on Thursday, Dec. 28, 2023.



PHOTOS BY GREGG FORWERCK FOR N.C. STATE ATHLETICS

RIGHT: Former Lakewood star and current N.C. State defensive back Brandon Cisse (25) makes a tackle against Clemson on Saturday, Oct. 28, 2023.

CISSE FROM PAGE A32

their wings.

“Payton Wilson, the outside linebacker we had last year, he really did a great job of that last year, really bringing me along and teaching me the ropes. He saw it in me, and that really meant a lot,” Cisse said. “Then obviously, Ayden White, who came back this year on the other side of me. It was really great to play with both of those guys, and having Hayden back, he’s a real mentor to me.”

Cisse wasn’t just playing in garbage time as a freshman; he was making plays in clutch situations. The former Gator finished the year with 10 total tackles, seeing career-high playing time against Marshall and Clemson. But his biggest splash came against Miami. The Wolfpack were looking for a late stop to seal their 20-6 win over the Hurricanes and earn bowl eligibility when Cisse dropped back and helped ice the game with his first career interception.

“It means a lot. I wish I would’ve caught one earlier in the game that we made a pick on with Devan Boykin. I think it’s just a little progress that shows the work I put in throughout that whole year,” Cisse said of his breakout moment. “Playing in big

games like that, it was one of those moments where it was like, ‘OK, I’m here now.’ I didn’t have any confidence issues, I was at my best. Being able to do it against a school like Miami means a lot to me. I grew up watching those guys. That’s something I always carry with myself, and I’m just looking forward to making more big-time plays like that.”

The former Gator DB isn’t resting on his laurels after a strong start to his career. If anything, it made him more hungry to earn a spot in the starting lineup.

“This offseason has been elite so far,” Cisse said. “I’ve put on 15 pounds. I’m up to 195 pounds now. I’m a lot faster. It was something I already had, speed, but I’m a lot better student of the game. I know what everybody’s job is on defense, and I watch a lot of tape, as well. It’s been a really good offseason. I put a lot of time towards it, and I hope it’s my time now.”

After a year that surpassed some expectations, Cisse is setting a high bar as a sophomore.

“We talk about it all the time; I know the expectations from them is for me to be one of the top players in the country, and that’s the same thing I expect from myself,” Cisse said. “I’m pretty sure they’ll put me in a position to make that happen. It’s all up to me

to make the plays. I have full trust in them; I have no problem with my development. I feel like Coach Mitchell and Coach Gibson have done a good job with my development to make sure I’m ready to play in big-time games. Now they have a lot more confidence in me and trust in me to go out there and have an even bigger year.”

While Cisse has been shining at N.C. State, his younger brother Cedric has been making a name for himself back home at Lakewood. The younger Cisse is a two-sport standout entering his senior year, just like the Wolfpack DB once was. The elder Cisse loves watching his brother follow in his footsteps, especially as he wades into the waters of recruitment.

“I’m extremely proud of him. I’m very proud he’s able to do the things he’s done. He’s extremely talented,” the rising sophomore said. “I tell him all the time that I wish I had known this, and I tell him all the things I know. He knows and understands that his process is a little different from mine, and I’m happy for him. I know one day he’s going to be one of the best athletes with whatever he does, wherever he goes. Anything he needs, he always knows he can call me, and I’m hoping I can keep being a great role model for him.”

Cisse’s advice for his younger broth-

er has been simple.

“Just giving him more of the college scene and making sure he knows the work ethic,” he said. “I feel like in high school, you see a lot of things on YouTube and things like that, but he understands the work that’s put in. He works out with me when I go home and he understands what it looks like.”

The summer is quickly coming to an end for Cisse. Offseason programs will soon transition into fall camp, and he has just one goal for the Wolfpack this fall.

“I wanna win the ACC Championship, make the College Football Playoff and try to be one of the best cornerbacks in the country. We’ll see where it goes from there,” he said. “It’s all about team first and trying to make sure we can compete for an ACC Championship and get 10-plus wins, something that hasn’t been done here in a long time.”

While the former Gator isn’t big on circling specific games on the calendar, he has his eye on the season opener more than he might typically.

“I wouldn’t say anything in particular. We start Week 1 with Western Carolina, which will be against one of my best friends, Zayveon Wells, so that’ll be a big thing to me,” he said. “But each game is a big one, so we have to take it week by week.”



LEFT: Wilson Hall head coach Adam Jarecki, second from left, is joined by then-seniors, from left, Grayson Alexander, Dylan Jones and Landon Gilley at the 2023 *Sumter Item* Football Media Day.



RIGHT: Sumter High head coach Mark Barnes, center, is flanked by Pate Merchant, left, and Jahiem Rose as he speaks at last year's *Sumter Item* Football Media Day. The event will be back at USC Sumter on Aug. 10.

ADAM FLASH / SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS

Sumter Item to host Hines Furniture Football Media Day on Aug. 10

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

Football season is rapidly approaching, which means it's time to sit down with the area's coaches and stars to preview the upcoming fall on the gridiron.

The *Sumter Item* will host its fifth-annual Football Media Day, which is presented by Hines Furniture, on Saturday, Aug. 10. The location of the event is still being finalized, so check back in at theitem.com/sports

for more information. The event is open to the public and will also be livestreamed on *The Item* Sports Facebook page. Other partners for the event include Kona Ice and Simpson Hardware and Sports. *The Item* is still looking for additional partners; if interested, reach out to your *Sumter Item* sales representative or contact advertising@theitem.com.

This year's event will feature a slew of new coaches, though some are familiar faces. Lee Academy is now led by Will Furse, the former Laurence

Manning top dog. Robbie Briggs returns to LMA in his place as changes swirl in SCISA football. Thomas Sumter is also under new leadership, as Stacy Bell takes over for the Generals this season. On the SCHSL side, former Manning assistant Patrick Fleming moves across Clarendon County to take charge at Scott's Branch.

We'll hear from all of those newcomers, as well as area staples like Sumter High's Mark Barnes, Crestwood's Roosevelt Nelson, Manning's Reggie Kennedy, Wilson Hall's Adam Jarecki and

Lee Central's Justin Danner. We had a few new coaches last year who have a season under their belts in either new roles or at new schools, including Larry Cornelius at East Clarendon, Willie Offord at Lakewood and Todd Larrimer at Clarendon Hall.

Each school will bring two or three of its brightest stars and leaders to share some insight on the upcoming season.

We'll dive into the biggest position

SEE **MEDIA DAY**, PAGE A35

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MEDIA DAY

FROM PAGE A34

battles, new classifications and regions for several schools and so much more. If you're a football fan in Sumter, Clarendon or Lee County, you won't want to miss a full day of gridiron chats.

Sumter School District will bookend the day, as Crestwood kicks things off at 10 a.m. and Sumter High closes the afternoon at 4 p.m. If you can't join us for the event, the videos of each team will be available on *The Item* Sports Facebook page for future reference.

Information from *The Sumter Item's* Football Media Day will be used in our football preview section, Gridiron, which is set to debut in the paper that hits mailboxes on Saturday, Aug. 24. That section and the individual stories will debut online in advance of Week 1.



ADAM FLASH / SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS

The Lee Academy cheerleaders performed at last year's Sumter Item Football Media Day, presented by Hines Furniture.

TENTATIVE SCHEDULE FOR MEDIA DAY

- 10 a.m. CRESTWOOD
- 10:30 a.m. LAKEWOOD
- 11 a.m. MANNING HIGH
- 11:30 a.m. LAURENCE MANNING
- Noon LEE ACADEMY
- 1 p.m. CLARENDON HALL
- 1:30 p.m. LEE CENTRAL
- 2 p.m. WILSON HALL
- 2:30 p.m. SCOTT'S BRANCH
- 3 p.m. EAST CLARENDON
- 3:30 p.m. THOMAS SUMTER
- 4 p.m. SUMTER HIGH



FAR LEFT: Crestwood head football coach Roosevelt Nelson is flanked by Jenoryen Gleaton, left, and Javion Martin while speaking at last year's football media day.

LEFT: Manning High head coach Reggie Kennedy speaks at last year's football media day.

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ABOVE: Blake Roark of the Jamil Flyers points to the crowd during the 2023 Sumter Christmas Parade on Dec. 3.

RIGHT: Unit Captain Zac Arnold and Blake Roark meet with the Jamil Flyers for a meeting on Monday, July 8, at the Midland Retired Military Association building in Dalzell.

PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM



A fez, a go-kart and a purpose

Sumter's Jamil Flyers help support children's hospital through parade appearances, raising money

BY ADAM FLASH
adam@theitem.com

It's not every day you see men driving around in go-karts sporting fez hats. However, if you attend a parade throughout the year in Sumter or any surrounding community, you'll likely run into them.

They're the Jamil Flyers, a Sumter-based unit that is part of the Jamil Shrine Temple in Columbia, which in turn is part of the Shriners International organization. And they're looking to put Sumter back on the map.

Founded in May 2023, the Flyers, currently with 11 members and continuously growing, is one of three units in Sumter alongside the Streakers and Jets. Each unit is themed, and the Flyers revolve heavily around parades, participating in about one a month on average in Sumter or in other areas across the state.

"I think of as a kid seeing Shriners come through with our fezes on and driving the go-karts. That's what I remember from parades, and we're just trying to keep that going," said Josh Sivertsen, Jamil Flyers assistant director. "The parades really just show people who we are."

Their go-karts make them stand out in a sea of parade floats, and they take great pride in them, oftentimes building them from the ground up and working through the night to make sure they're ready to go for parade days. "We put a lot of time and effort into the go-karts," said Kris Jordan, Flyers director.

Being from Sumter, the Flyers draw inspiration from Shaw Air Force Base and the F-16 fighter jet in the design of their go-karts and parade attire.

As one of three units in town, the Flyers work closely with the other units toward the same goal: raising money for the Shriners Children's Hospital in Greenville. "The Jets and the Streakers are all Shriners, just like we are, just different themes that they have. [It's] all the same goal, and we all work really well here together," Sivertsen said.

Sumter's three units, along with all other units in the temple, work to provide support for the Shriners Hospital, with a goal of offsetting the cost of

FLYERS FROM PAGE A36

medical bills for families as much as possible, from transportation to the hospital to the care needed once there. Units like the Road Runners are even in place heavily to provide transportation to and from the hospital.

"Last year alone, they drove over 7,000 miles transporting patients and their families," according to Jordan. "The temple gave over \$60,000 to the Greenville Shrine Hospital."

"Every time you see us out in the community, we're doing it for a reason. We're doing it to support the hospital, to support the operations fund, which in turn helps the children," Sivertsen added. "Most of us are fathers ourselves. And just some of the stories we hear, some of the young children that we meet ... every time I meet one, I get more involved because I feel like my purpose is here for a reason."

The hospital in Greenville is one of many in the Shriners International network, and South Carolina's three Shrine temples, along with other units in other states, help to support it. Shriners International, a Masonic fraternity, was founded in 1872, originally called the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine.

"What we do is important because of the cause, but it also gives us the opportunity to be fraternal with other brothers that have the same beliefs that we do," Sivertsen said.

While Shrine membership requires one to reach the status of Master Mason, donations are always welcome from the community to help support their cause. To get in touch, contact Jordan at (803) 968-2327 or Sivertsen at (843) 373-9151.

The Flyers are currently holding a raffle as well in partnership with Simpson Hardware. Tickets are \$10 each, and the gift card prizes reach as high as \$1,000.

"We're happy to be here. We plan on growing, and we plan on raising a lot of money and giving it to where it needs to go," Sivertsen said.



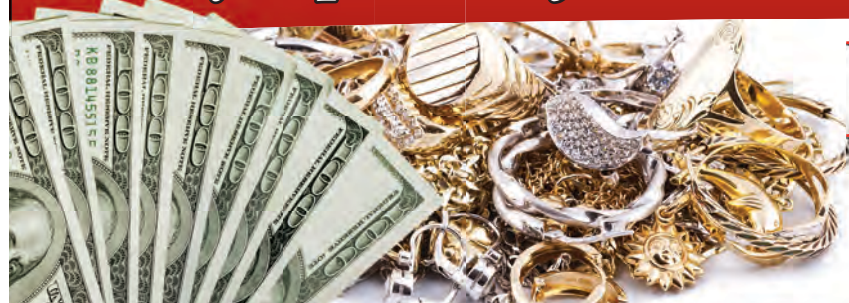
PHOTOS BY ADAM FLASH / THE SUMTER ITEM

The Jamil Flyers met on Monday, July 8, at the Midland Retired Military Association building in Dalzell.



The Jamil Flyers met on Monday, July 8, at the Midland Retired Military Association building in Dalzell. Pictured is Chief Rabban Kenn Ouzts, a guest at the meeting visiting from the Jamil Shrine Center, which the Flyers are a part of.

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Education

South Carolina's annual Tax-Free Weekend is Aug. 2-4

BY SCDOR

The South Carolina Department of Revenue reminds shoppers that computers, clothes, school supplies and a variety of other school-year essentials can be purchased without paying sales tax during South Carolina's annual 72-hour Tax-Free Weekend starting Aug. 2.

"As inflation continues to drain many wallets, this year's Tax Free Weekend offers some relief for weary families," said SCDOR Director Hartley Powell. "Every shopper saves money during this tax holiday, particularly on back-to-school essentials."

Here's what you need to know about Tax Free Weekend:

The 2024 Tax Free Weekend, also called the Sales Tax Holiday, is Friday, Aug. 2, through Sunday, Aug. 4.

Eligible items can be purchased online and in store without paying the state's 6% sales tax and any applicable local taxes during the weekend.

Tax-free items include computers, printers, diapers, earbuds and headphones, purses, shoes and certain bed and bath items. Eligible items can be new or used and are eligible regardless of price.

Items that are not exempt from sales tax during Tax-Free Weekend include digital cameras, smartphones, jewelry, cosmetics, eyewear, wallets, watches and furniture.

25 YEARS OF TAX-FREE WEEKEND

Tax-Free Weekend was created by the South Carolina Legislature and is outlined in SC Code Section 12-36-2120(57).

Tax-Free Weekend in South Carolina first started in 2000, making this year the 25th anniversary of the annual event.

Last year, South Carolina shoppers bought more than \$30.4 million in tax-free items during Tax Free Weekend. Shoppers saved more than \$1.8 million in sales tax.

MORE INFORMATION

For a detailed list of tax-free items, shopping lists and FAQs, visit dor.sc.gov/taxfreeweekend.

Review Revenue Ruling #19-4 for FAQs and Information Letter #24-7 for a complete list of exempt and non-exempt items.

If you feel like you were charged sales tax on an exempt item during Tax-Free Weekend, requesting a refund from the retailer should be your first step. If it's helpful, refer them to Revenue Ruling 19-4. Retailers with questions about Tax-Free Weekend can contact the SCDOR



Celebrate a new year of learning with back-to-school events

STAFF REPORT

The first day of school is right around the corner, and several local events are planned to help your student or students prepare.

First, the Sumter Mall will hold its Movin' & Groovin' Back-to-School Event from noon to 3 p.m. Saturday, July 20, at the mall. This event promises a fun-filled day with activities, involvement from local organizations, fantastic deals and more to help Sumter gear up for the upcoming school year. Admission is free, and attendees will have the chance to register to win a gift basket filled with all the essentials. For more information, visit the Sumter Mall Facebook Page.

Next, Trukuntry Steppas will hold its first free Back 2 School Bash from 3 to 7 p.m. Sunday, July 21, at 2035 N. Kings Highway, Dalzell. School supplies will be provided to each child. Non-perishable food donations will

be accepted for the homeless shelter. Music will be provided by DJ Payme. Get ready to line dance. Vendors and food trucks are invited and asked to contact Donna at (803) 236-9863 or Shannie at (803) 972-0436.

On Tuesday, July 23, Sumter Police Department will host its annual Back to School Bash from 10 a.m. to noon at the Birnie HOPE Center, at 210 S. Purdy St. There will be hotdogs and snow cones, facepainting, balloon art and music by DJ Howie D. Meet and greet representatives from Tandem Health, Healthy Blue of South Carolina, USC Sumter, YMCA, Sumter Fire Department, Sumter Behavioral Health Services, SLED Amber Alert, SAFE Kids Sumter County, Absolute Total Care and Sumter EMS. All children in attendance must be accompanied by a responsible adult who is 18 years of age or older. In the event of rain, the bash will be moved to Thursday, July 25, same place and time.

at SalesTax@dor.sc.gov.

SHARE THE SAVINGS

Retailers can spread the word about

their favorite Tax-Free Weekend deals, and shoppers can share their savings and photos using the hashtag #Sctax-free.



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Social Security Matters

Will IRA withdrawals affect my Medicare premiums?

BY RUSSELL GLOOR

National Social Security advisor at the AMAC Foundation, the nonprofit arm of the Association of Mature American Citizens

Dear Rusty: I am a member of AMAC and learn so much from the Ask Rusty column. I hope you can give me some information about a question that has come up in my family.



Russell Gloor

My husband is retired and has reached full retirement age. He is considering withdrawing money from an IRA to pay off our mortgage. We are wondering what, if any, penalties may be incurred on Social Security, Medicare and income tax. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Concerned Taxpayer

Dear Concerned: Thank you for contacting the AMAC Foundation Social Security Advisory Service. Regarding your question on the impact of withdrawing IRA funds, there is no impact to your husband's gross Social Security benefit. The amount withdrawn, of course, is considered ordinary income for federal income tax purposes and will need to be included as such on your federal income tax return and will therefore affect your federal income tax liability when you file the return.

Depending on the amount withdrawn, there could be an impact to the

Medicare premium due to the Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) provision. Assuming you file jointly, you will pay a higher Medicare Part B premium if your modified adjusted gross income is above certain thresholds (i.e., more than \$103,000 for an individual and \$206,000 for a married couple). Please note that Medicare's procedures will not note this income change for two years, so if you make the withdrawal in 2024 it will not trigger the increases until your 2026 Medicare premiums. A change to your Medicare premium might also result in a change to your net Social Security payment at that time (since Medicare is automatically deducted from your Social Security payment).

Also depending on the amount withdrawn, you may have to pay an additional amount on top of your Medicare Part D premium. The Part D adjustment amount is calculated based on a percentage of the Part D national base beneficiary premium, not on a percentage of the plan premium.

The Social Security Administration mails letters to beneficiaries who currently pay a Part B Income-Related Monthly Adjustment Amount (IRMAA) and, according to the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS), are in a Part D plan. The letter explains the additional Part D amount and how exactly Social Security will collect it. You can contact SSA at 1-800-772-1213 or your local SSA agency if you have any further questions about your Part D IRMAA premium.

Dear Rusty: My wife and I are going to be taking Social Security at 62. She will be 62 on April 15, 2025. I will be 62 Aug. 7, 2025. When should we apply for Social Security?

Ready to file

Dear Ready: Social Security recommends you apply for benefits about 2-3 months prior to when you want your benefits to start (to get them time to process your application). You will specify on your application when you wish your benefit to start, so applying early isn't a problem. Just a few things to keep in mind:

Your first month of eligibility will be the first month you are 62 for the entire month. In your wife's case, her first month of eligibility will be May 2025, and in your case your first month of eligibility will be September 2025. Your wife's benefits will be paid on the third Wednesday of every month, and your benefits will be received on the second Wednesday of every month (payment dates depend on when your birthday falls).

Social Security has an earnings test for those collecting early benefits (before your full retirement age). If you are working and exceed the earnings limit, SS will take away some of your benefits. The earning limit for 2024 is \$22,320 and, if that is exceeded, SS will take away \$1 in benefit for every \$2 you are over the limit (the limit changes annually, so the 2025 limit will be more). Thus, if you plan to work after collecting, you

must stay aware of the earnings test. If you earn substantially more than the earnings limit, you even may be temporarily ineligible to collect benefits (until you either earn less or reach your full retirement age (FRA) when the earning test no longer applies).

By claiming at 62, you will incur a cut in benefits of about 30% from the amount you would get by waiting until your FRA to claim. And, except for annual cost-of-living adjustments, that is a permanent reduction. FYI, your benefit will continue to grow if you wait longer to claim.

Deciding when to claim Social Security should take into account your financial needs, your life expectancy and your goals as a couple. Claiming at 62 is the right choice for many, but waiting longer, if feasible, will result in a higher monthly amount, which could be beneficial if your life expectancy is long. Of course, we are here for you if you have any additional questions, so please don't hesitate to contact us again if needed.

This article is intended for information purposes only and does not represent legal or financial guidance. It presents the opinions and interpretations of the AMAC Foundation's staff, trained and accredited by the National Social Security Association (NSSA). NSSA and the AMAC Foundation and its staff are not affiliated with or endorsed by the Social Security Administration or any other governmental entity.

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Sumter's hotels

This edition of Reflections remembers the construction of numerous hotels in downtown Sumter. These buildings were very important for



Sammy Way
REFLECTIONS

growth of Sumter as it entered the 19th century. The arrival of the railroads in the 1850s and the ensuing influx of “drummers,” businessmen and settlers required a large amount of temporary living space. The construction of hotels proved to be essential in the development of the Sumter community.

The term hotel is derived from the Latin word “hoste,” a “person or thing that provides something for a guest, usually lodging, and sometimes food.” The earliest hotels appear to have been resting places for transients, and the quality of these lodging facilities and accommodations appears to have been minimal at best. The Middle Ages saw hotels offering both a place of rest and in many cases becoming the temporary home of increasing numbers of travelers.

Hotels have played an important role in the development of the City of Sumter. It is sad that these majestic structures have all disappeared, but the effect of their contributions to our history is still evident.

See page A41 for more photos.



LEFT: The Imperial Hotel on South Harvin Street near the A.C.L. Railroad Depot is seen in 1913. It was torn down in 1968.

BELOW: Claremont Hotel was at the corner of Bartlette and South Main streets.

SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS



Holiday Inn, June 1960



SUMTER ITEM FILE PHOTOS

Hotel Sumter



The Monaghan Home once housed the Marion Hotel.



Jackson Hotel



Lobby of Hotel Sumter



Jervey Hotel

Improvements

New art park set to enhance South Sumter

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE

alaysa@theitem.com

South Sumter is gearing up for a big change as construction on its new Art Park comes to a gradual close.

Along the strip of Manning Avenue, the park will occupy the once-grassy area where a Sumter County Sheriff's Office substation stood at 645 Manning Ave. Plans to transfer the county property to the city for the park were finalized in a Sumter County Council meeting in August 2022, according to *The Item* archives.

The city collaborated with Rep. David Weeks, D-Sumter, for this project, and the

funding came from the South Carolina Arts Commission in the amount of \$550,000.

A six- to seven-month time frame for completion was given at the September meeting; the city broke ground in March 2024. While it is on track, Weeks expects the park to be completed about early September.

According to preliminary design plans for the park, it will include two basketball courts with a vibrant, colorful, swirling art design, sidewalks, an art-themed playground, a pavilion and restrooms, greenery, parking and more. The layout of the park will allow parents to

keep watch over their children as they enjoy



'This park is simply a piece of a puzzle. The greater picture, of course, is the redoing of Manning Avenue in that corridor. The emphasis is on making that corridor an arts-oriented corridor, starting from when you get off the bridge all the way to the end. It's just a step-by-step process.'

REP. DAVID WEEKS, D-SUMTER

SEE **PARK**, PAGE A43



PHOTOS BY ZAC HOOKS / THE SUMTER ITEM

South Sumter Art Park is expected to be completed in early September 2024. The park will include two basketball courts with a vibrant, colorful, swirling art design, sidewalks, an art-themed playground, a pavilion and restrooms, greenery, parking and more.

South Sumter Art Park is expected to be completed in early September 2024. The park will include two basketball courts with a vibrant, colorful, swirling art design, sidewalks, an art-themed playground, a pavilion and restrooms, greenery, parking and more.

PHOTOS BY ZAC HOOKS / THE SUMTER ITEM



PARK FROM PAGE A42

the park. While the remainder of the equipment and amenities are being installed, all that remains is to decide on an artist to install the first of many temporary art installations.

The park will not only improve the look of the area, but also showcase local artistic talent.

“We’re feeling really good about being able to display some of the things that local artists who grew up on the South Side do; they do pretty good work,” Weeks expressed. “It’s a win-win for us all the way when it comes to focusing and showcasing the arts and supporting the arts

community.”

He expressed gratitude to City of Sumter staff, the Arts Commission, the arts community and all who worked to bring this project to life.

The park will also be a part of a broader plan to revitalize Manning Avenue into an arts-focused area. Weeks mentioned street improvements and a greater emphasis on art expression to come in the next year.

“This park is simply a piece of a puzzle. The greater picture, of course, is the redoing of Manning Avenue in that corridor. The emphasis is on making that corridor an arts-oriented corridor, starting from when you get off the bridge all the way to the end,” Weeks said. “It’s just a step-by-step process.”

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Aerial refueling



PHOTOS BY U.S. AIR FORCE SENIOR AIRMAN STEVEN CARDO

U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Mallory Frister, 50th Air Refueling Squadron KC-135 Stratotanker co-pilot assigned to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, communicates with air crew during an aerial refueling mission alongside 20th Fighter Wing F-16 Fighting Falcons over the South Carolina coast on June 26. The 50th ARS provides aerial refueling support to 20th FW F-16s to extend their flight time and increase the scale of their training operations, allowing pilots to sharpen their skills in a more realistic training environment.



U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Mallory Frister, 50th Air Refueling Squadron KC-135 Stratotanker co-pilot assigned to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, prepares for takeoff from the flightline at Shaw Air Force Base on June 26. The KC-135 provides aerial refueling support while simultaneously being capable of transporting litter and ambulatory patients during aeromedical evacuations.



A U.S. Air Force KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to the 50th Air Refueling Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, prepares for an aerial refueling mission on the flightline at Shaw Air Force Base on June 26. The KC-135 enhances the Air Force's capability to accomplish its mission of global reach, providing aerial refueling support to U.S. and allied nation aircraft worldwide.



A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon assigned to the 55th Fighter Squadron flies alongside a KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to the 50th Air Refueling Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, during aerial refueling operations over the South Carolina coast on June 26. The 50th ARS worked to provide aerial refueling support to 20th Fighter Wing aircraft, expanding the scale of training operations and reinforcing mission readiness.

A U.S. Air Force F-16C Fighting Falcon assigned to the 55th Fighter Squadron receives fuel from a KC-135 Stratotanker assigned to the 50th Air Refueling Squadron at MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, over the South Carolina coast on June 26. The F-16 is a multirole fighter aircraft capable of air-to-surface and air-to-air combat operations, ensuring air supremacy in defense of the United States and its allies.

PHOTOS BY U.S. AIR FORCE
SENIOR AIRMAN STEVEN CARDO



U.S. Air Force 1st Lt. Mallory Frister, left, and Capt. Caleb Elms, 50th Air Refueling Squadron KC-135 Stratotanker co-pilot and aircraft commander assigned to MacDill Air Force Base, Florida, take off from the flightline at Shaw Air Force Base on June 26. 50th ARS pilots work to provide aerial refueling support to U.S. and allied nation aircraft, expanding the scale of Air Force training and mission operations globally.

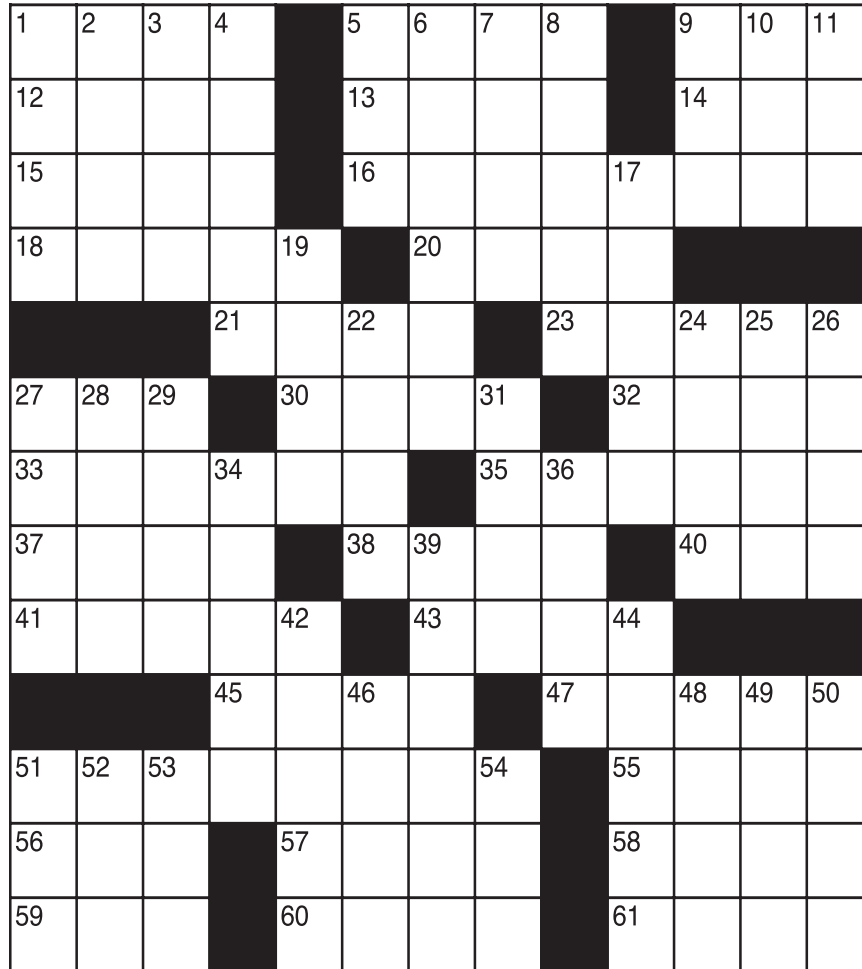
CROSSWORD

ACROSS

1. Bungles
5. Mispronounce
9. Adam's mate
12. Detroit athlete
13. Adrift
14. You bet!
15. Metallic vein
16. Afghans
18. Iron output
20. Hymn finale
21. Pottery oven
23. Smallest
27. The _____ (rock group)
30. Average skirt
32. Tiger _____
33. Cash in _____
35. Forty winks
37. Precinct
38. Huffed and puffed
40. Duet number
41. Mails
43. Dormant
45. Graceful trees
47. Mexican sauce
51. Roman vehicles
55. Ledge
56. Rowing tool
57. Defendant's answer
58. Give out
59. Fitness spot
60. Cause to go
61. Flightless bird

DOWN

1. Additions
2. Ruckus
3. Went on horseback
4. Go secretly
5. Scientific workshop
6. Oahu, e.g.
7. Union
8. Wall section
9. Look over
10. Dog's doc
11. Superman's letter
17. Prepared to pray
19. Silent actor
22. Body part
24. "_____ No Sunshine"
25. Side dish
26. Printed mistake
27. Covering
28. Leading man
29. Some poems
31. Cooled
34. Diner patron
36. Shoemaking tools
39. Eavesdrop
42. Petticoats
44. Relaxed
46. Lawn pest
48. Prom night wheels
49. Glided
50. Voice part
51. Machine's tooth
52. Dried grass
53. Provide weapons
54. Pathetic

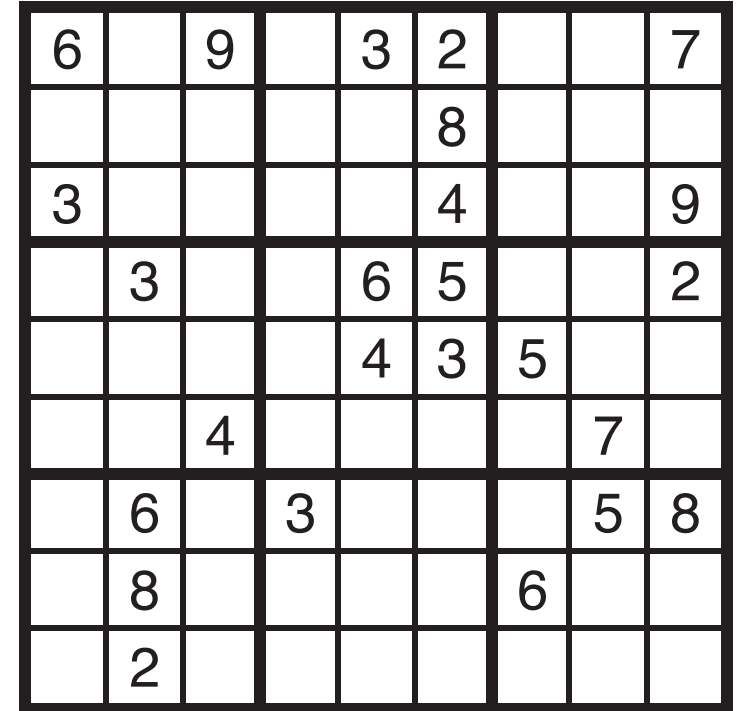


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SOLUTION



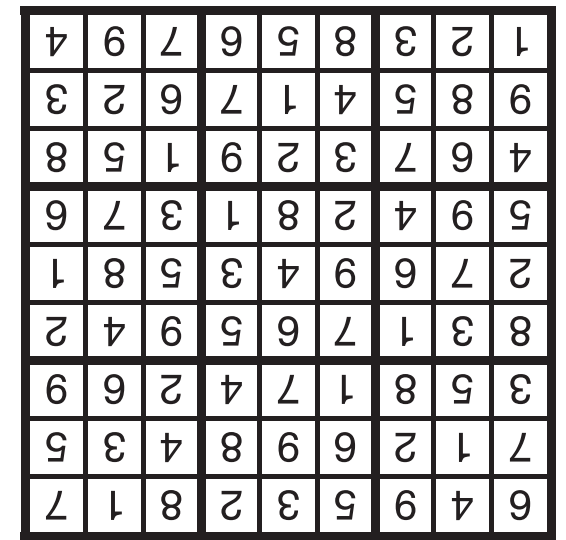
SUDOKU



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



Consumer protection

IRS warns of new scam targeting clean energy tax credit

BY THE INTERNAL REVENUE SERVICE

WASHINGTON — The Internal Revenue Service warns taxpayers not to fall victim to a new emerging scam involving buying clean energy tax credits.

In this latest scam, the IRS is seeing instances where unscrupulous tax return preparers are misrepresenting the rules for claiming clean energy tax credits under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA).

The transferability provisions of the IRA enable the purchase of eligible federal income tax credits from investments in clean energy to offset a buyer's tax liability. The IRS has seen taxpayers file returns using unscrupulous return preparers who are claiming pur-

chased clean energy credits that the taxpayer is ultimately unable to benefit from.

The scam is generally targeting individuals who file Form 1040. The preparers file returns that have individuals improperly claiming IRA credits that offset income tax from sources such as wages, Social Security and retirement account withdrawals.

Individuals purchasing tax credits under the IRA are subject to the passive activity rules for any purchased credits. Generally, this means they can only use purchased credits to offset income tax from a passive activity. Most taxpayers do not have passive income and a passive income tax liability. Most investment activities are not considered passive.

"This is another example where scammers are trying to use the complexity of the tax law to entice people into claiming credits they're not entitled to," said IRS Commissioner Danny Werfel. "Taxpayers should be wary of promoters pushing dubious credits like this and others. The IRS is watching

out for this scam, and we urge people to use a reputable tax professional before claiming complex credits like clean energy."

The IRS noted individual taxpayers claiming inappropriate credits risk future compliance action by the IRS and are responsible for repaying the inflated credit, plus interest and possible penalties.

Individual taxpayers considering purchasing clean energy credits under the IRA should consult a trusted tax professional for advice on whether they are eligible to purchase credits and claim the tax benefits. They should also understand how the limitations under the passive activity rules, and other portions of the tax code, may apply to their particular tax situation.

More information about clean energy can be found on the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022 page on [IRS.gov](https://www.irs.gov).

The IRS continues to warn taxpayers about other scams it continues to see that are misleading taxpayers into filing inappropriate claims for other tax credits. The IRS has warned taxpayers

not to fall for scams centered on the Fuel Tax Credit, the Sick and Family Leave Credit and household employment taxes. Fueled by misleading social media advice and promoters, the IRS has seen thousands of dubious claims come in earlier this year where it appears taxpayers are claiming credits for which they are not eligible, leading to refunds being delayed and the need for taxpayers to show they have legitimate documentation to support these claims.

REPORT FRAUD

To report an abusive tax scheme or a tax return preparer, people should use the online Form 14242 – Report Suspected Abusive Tax Promotions or Preparers or mail or fax a completed Form 14242 and any supporting material to the IRS Lead Development Center in the Office of Promoter Investigations.

Mail: Internal Revenue Service Lead Development Center, Stop MS5040, 24000 Avila Road, Laguna Niguel, California 92677 3405

Fax: (877) 477 9135



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