



Our newest Lakeside is in this edition

Our festival issue also includes Spring Home & Garden section

Chamber recognizes influential Sumterites at its annual gala

BY DEIRDRE CURRIN
deirdre@theitem.com

Among the beautiful greenery of downtown Sumter's La Piazza, many of those essential to Sumter's being gathered for an award ceremony targeting some of Sumter's most influential residents.

The ceremony, which was hosted by Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce, highlighted educators, business owners and economic developers; anyone who has changed Sumter and its people for the better was honored on Thursday, April 3.

The Chamber holds its gala

annually, and while it serves as an opportunity to recognize important Sumter figures, it is also the end of an era for the Chamber's current chair, who steps down from their spot for a new chair to take their place. This time, former Chamber Chair Cheryl Baker gave her final speech as chair and introduced the 2025-26 chair, David Eargle. "I have some pretty big shoes to fill," Eargle said about Baker. "You [Baker] led with heart, vision and integrity. We are grateful."

The Chamber's theme this year is Small Town, Big

SEE **GALA**, PAGE A5

50% grade floor fails in 4-4 tie vote

Sumter school board member McLeod changes stance based on constituents, against reinstating grading policy

BY BRUCE MILLS
bruce@theitem.com

Without a voting majority at Monday's meeting, Sumter school board did not pass a proposed policy requiring teachers to give students at least 50% as a grade as opposed to final grades based on performance.

In a 4-4 tie vote with one trustee abstaining, Sumter School District's Board of Trustees did not reinstate a quarterly grade floor for students. Robert's Rules of Order,

which governs conduct and decision-making for school boards in South Carolina, requires a majority for a motion to pass.

The motion for the grade floor was in its second and final reading after passing first reading 4-3 on March 24 and would have been a reversal after the previous school board removed the floor almost eight months ago.

Those voting to reinstate the 50% floor included Chairman Shawn Ragin, Vice Chairman Brian Alston, Brittany English and Gloria Lee.

Trustees voting against the measure included the Rev. Ralph Canty, Bonnie Disney, Phil Leventis and Matthew "Mac" McLeod.

Area 4 Trustee Tarah Johnson abstained from the vote.

SEE **VOTE**, PAGE A13

Item newsroom wins 36 awards in S.C. Press Association news contest

Best-performing paper in division garners President's Cup for Excellence

STAFF REPORT

The Sumter Item's newsroom won 36 awards recognizing work done in 2024 at the South Carolina Press Association's annual news contest, presented on

April 4 at the South Carolina Convention Center in Columbia during the association's annual meeting and banquet.

Winning work spanned every corner of journalism and news production, from reporting and

writing to photography, videography and newspaper and magazine design.

SCPA, established in 1852, promotes the welfare of the newspaper profession by providing professional services and advocacy to its 106 member newspapers, online news publications and college news organizations. Its services include lobbying, a legal/FOI hotline, industry legal representation, advertising representation, conventions and workshops for members and publications.

The contest is judged by newspaper employees in other states' press association members.

The Item took home 17 first-place awards, eight second-place and nine third-place recognitions. One of the first-place

SEE **AWARDS**, PAGE A13



The Sumter Item brought home 36 awards from the annual South Carolina Press Association News Contest — including second place in General Excellence and the President's Cup for Excellence in our division.

ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM



ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

The late editor and publisher Hubert Duvall Osteen Jr. was posthumously inducted into S.C. Press Association's Hall of Fame at the annual News Contest ceremony on April 4 for his decades of leadership and impact on South Carolina journalism.

Item's Osteen Jr. inducted into S.C. Press Association's Hall of Fame

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE
alaysa@theitem.com

"I think the future is still bright. But somebody has got to pull us together and not just determine the news but present it to the people in a sensible fashion, and particularly the news about the communities. That's what we're trying to do. I think we're succeeding."

Unwavering words spoken by the late Hubert Duvall Osteen Jr. as he sat in his office at *The Item* years ago, a warm smile on his face. He believed deeply in the power of local journalism and spent his life proving it.

Osteen Jr. represented the fourth of what is now six generations of Osteen family members in publishing, which

SEE **HALL OF FAME**, PAGE A13

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DEATHS, B6

Charlene Frazier
Carolyn M. Redick
James Edward Dizzley
Genell Ham
Samuel Sargent Sr.
Kimbrelly Marie Segars
Ronald Bernard Blanding

Willie Benjamin Jr.
Rev. Walter L. Proctor Jr.
Johnny Christopher Harkless
Mayo Wilson III
Sabrina Ann Holladay McWilliams
Rev. Ava Michele Kershaw Harris

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E-mail: pressrelease@theitem.com

City of Sumter sees 1st draft of Fiscal Year 2026 budget

BY DEIRDRE CURRIN
deirdre@theitem.com

It is once again budget season, and City of Sumter is in the midst of prepping for June when city council will hold readings on a final budget. At its most recent city council meeting, city staff presented the first preliminary draft budget.

The fiscal year will begin on July 1, and the draft shows a \$1.7 million deficit. According

to Assistant City Manager Howie Owens, this is not abnormal in the draft stages of a budget, and it will need to be balanced before the fiscal year begins.

As it stands, the budget estimate shows projected revenue of \$91,726,269 and projected expenditures of \$93,466,302. The general fund balance shows \$53,547,337 in projected revenue and \$55,287,370 in projected expenditures.

The general fund is the fund

through which the city pays for most of the government services the city provides, such as police services, fire, public works and sanitation — services which are not funded by a particular revenue stream. This is what property taxes and business license revenues go toward.

Two of the biggest expenditures in the draft budget from the general fund are \$12,798,059 to go to the police department and \$10,371,256 to

go to the fire department for wages, benefits and a multitude of supplies.

All of these numbers are subject to change, as they are part of a draft. A budget must be produced no less than 40 days before the start of the fiscal year, hence the draft is looked at in April. The draft did not have a proposed millage increase, and according to City of Sumter Assistant City Manager Howie Owens, a millage increase has not been

in any discussions regarding the city's budget.

In short, millage, or a mill, is used to calculate local property taxes.

"One mill is equal to one thousandth of a dollar per \$1 of assessed property value," according to the Municipal Association of South Carolina. "If a city council approves a tax of 90 mills, then the taxpayer will pay \$90 per \$1,000 of assessed property value."

Sumter Sheriff's Office earns 'Gold Level Status' for DUI enforcement at annual Highway Safety Awards

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE
alaysha@theitem.com

Sumter County Sheriff's Office went for the gold and was recognized for its efforts in keeping roadways safe at the annual Highway Safety Law Enforcement Awards on Wednesday, April 2, in Columbia.

The annual event, sponsored by Office of Highway Safety and Justice Programs, allows law enforcement agencies statewide to gather for a night of camaraderie and congratulations for highway safety enforcement throughout the previous year.

Among the night's recipients, Sumter County Sheriff's Office achieved Gold Status in the 2024 Law Enforcement Target Zero Challenge. The challenge seeks to enhance law enforcement presence and enforcement activity throughout the state, particularly during seasons or holidays when there is increased wrecks and fatalities, including Christmas/New Year, Memorial Day weekend, Labor Day and during the summer.

In 2024, the sheriff's office issued 2,590 speeding citations and made 27 DUI arrests, according to Mark Bordeaux, public information officer for the sheriff's office.

"I am proud of our deputies' work," said Sheriff Anthony Dennis. "People foolishly put their lives and the lives of others at risk when they drink and drive. Lives can be saved, and it is not



PHOTOS PROVIDED BY SUMTER COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE
Lt. Mike McCoy, center, accepts the Gold Level Status Award for Sumter County Sheriff's Office for its efforts in the DUI enforcement challenge Target Zero Challenge at the annual Highway Safety Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony on April 2.

complicated. It is simple — do not get behind the wheel of a car if you are under the influence of alcohol or anything that could impair your driving."

Lt. Mike McCoy with Sumter County Sheriff's Office also serves as coordinator for the Third Circuit Law Enforcement Network. He represented

the department at the event and expressed his gratitude to the men and women who made this achievement possible.

"The men and women of the Sumter County Sheriff's Office work hard each and every day to keep our communities and roadways safe," McCoy said. "It's

an honor to be part of this great law enforcement family and the partnerships with state, federal, local agencies in driving our numbers down."

"One life is too many to lose on our roadways."

The sheriff's office also achieved gold level status in 2023.



Lt. Mike McCoy, right, accepts the Gold Level Status Award for Sumter County Sheriff's Office for the office's efforts in the DUI enforcement challenge Target Zero Challenge at the annual Highway Safety Law Enforcement Awards Ceremony on April 2.



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SUMTER TODAY

NOW STREAMING ON YOUTUBE

On Friday, March 28, the Lincoln High School Preservation Alumni Association hosted the official groundbreaking of the Lincoln Museum and Heritage Complex, a project that was decades in the making and born from memory, mission and deep community love.

<https://m.youtube.com/watch?v=f-necneNFLKY>

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH CAROLINA
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A Palmetto College Campus

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Commercial hot spot on the west side

A Waffle House on Pine-wood Road next to a relatively new Dominos Pizza and an Express Oil Change and Tire Engineers, at 2031 McCrays Mill Road, are new businesses on the west side of the City of Sumter. Waffle House will open soon, and the Express Oil Change opened recently. The west side of town has seen continued commercial development in recent years and has been anchored by a Walmart Neighborhood Market that opened several years ago in the area.

PHOTOS BY ABIGAIL PITTMAN / THE SUMTER ITEM



Living on Purpose: Our eternal existence is a reality

We spoke last week about the holy city of God coming down to sit on the earth, often referred to as Zion or Mount Zion, Bride of Christ, Tabernacle of God, City of God, City of the Great King, Celestial City, City Foursquare and Heavenly Jerusalem. After the millennium, many believe this will be the eternal home of believers called heaven, a realm beyond the imagination where God as the eternal Lord and King literally dwells and rules from His throne with His followers forever. Isaiah 65 and 2 Peter: 3 talk about the new heavens and the new earth along with other passages concerning heaven like John 14, Philippians 3 and Hebrews 11.



Billy Holland

I realize that many people have their own thoughts about where heaven will be and what will be there, and I admit I've had my share of ideas. When I was a kid, I day-dreamed of heaven as a place that is trillions of light years beyond the galaxies where we could fly anywhere in the cosmos with unimaginable supernatural abilities. I envisioned communication with telepathy and indescribable ideas related to the mysteries of another dimension. However, when we take a closer look, we notice that we are not traveling a long way to get to heaven, but according to many Bible scholars, heaven is actually coming here. Yes, it will be mesmerizing, but we also notice it will contain familiar things that are similar to what we have now. We've seen pictures of people floating on clouds playing harps, and this eternal lounging sounds nice, but according to the Bible, worship and singing are not all we will do. I

might add that many do not really like to sing or worship now. Many scholars say the scriptures reveal we will have a chance to exercise our gifts and talents in a far greater way than we ever imagined. There will be much to do, and yes, work and responsibility will be a part of it. On earth, our labors are tiresome and frustrating, but in a sinless environment that is free from the curse, not only will we live with a joyful, loving and patient attitude, but we will also have endless strength and excitement. Our lives will be victorious since He is the glorious conquering Lamb of God, and because of His love, we will be anointed and blessed in everything we think and do. The light of His majesty will illuminate heaven, as we will never be sick, depressed, disappointed, discouraged or even need to sleep. A question I receive often is when we die (including all the people that have passed since Adam and Eve), do we go

straight to heaven when we die, or do we go somewhere to wait for the judgment? This is an excellent study for those who are interested in the subject. The verse in 2 Corinthians 5:8 that says to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord is commonly used when talking about the moment of our departure. I've heard this all my life in context to all saints being instantly with Jesus, and it's technically true. (Actually, I've never attended a funeral where the person who passed was not declared to be in the arms of Christ no matter if they were a Christian or not). However, some teachers are convinced that instead of entering God's abode to see Him face to face, there is a temporary realm called Sheol, or the grave where all spirits wait until after the final resurrection and judgment. Some say that all believers enjoy a peaceful awareness of God's presence in what is called Paradise or Abraham's

bosom, and after the resurrection when we are given our new glorified bodies, we will spend eternity in the heaven Jesus promised to prepare. The other compartment of Sheol called Hades is for non-believers who are experiencing this dark and dreadful realm. The lost are awaiting the final judgment where they will be sentenced to spend an eternity in Gehenna or hell without the light, love and presence of God. We notice when Jesus was on the cross, one man begged that He remember him, and Christ replied, "Today you will be with me in Paradise." Do you believe Jesus went to Sheol and preached the good news of His love and forgiveness to those in Paradise and Hades? I would like to know what you think. Email: Psalms103@gmail.com
Dr. Holland is a minister, chaplain, and author. Read more about the Christian life at billyhollandministries.com.

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Sumter SPCA benefit concert April 19 to feature tribute band Heart Breaker

BY ALAYSHA MAPLE
alaysa@theitem.com

Looking for a tail-wagging good time? Try Sumter SPCA's benefit concert happening Saturday, April 19.

Only 10 days until Heart Breaker, the ultimate tribute band to the band, Heart, is live and in full effect at Sumter SPCA.

National touring acts Staci McBeth and Joan Burton are based in North Carolina but travel the country with a goal of "playing each song with love, respect and a true passion for the original material." They perform some of Heart's greatest hits, including "Alone," "These Dreams," "Crazy on You," "Barracuda," as well as a taste of Led Zeppelin songs that inspired Heart.

Admission is \$20, and all proceeds will benefit Sumter SPCA. Food as well as alcoholic and nonalcoholic beverages will be available for purchase throughout the event.

The event will be held from 4 to 6 p.m. at 1100 S. Guignard Drive.



FLYER PROVIDED

CHURCH NEWS

First Baptist Missionary Church, 219 S. Washington St., Sumter, will have a Food Pantry Giveaway on Friday, April 11, 2025, at 1 p.m. as long as supplies last.

Hearts United, which meets at Bethesda Church of God, 2730 Broad St., announces:

- Saturday, April 12 - Hearts United will meet from 10 a.m. to noon. International Bible teacher, pastor and author Dr. Peter Wynn and his wife, Joy, are returning to bring a powerful, relevant, life-changing message. Peter and Joy have traveled extensively around the world and have ministered teaching, healing and deliverance in more than 45 nations. Dr. Wynn is senior pastor at Antioch International Church,

Fort Mill, and president and director of ministry for Christians for Messiah Ministries Rock Hill. In 2003, he joined Derek Prince Ministries, serving as their director of ministry. He ministered across the USA and also led their Hispanic work around the world. This was a special blessing to Dr. Wynn because Derek Prince was his grandfather. Continental breakfast included. Doors open at 9:40 a.m. with meeting at 10 a.m.

Church of Christ, 313 Mooneyham Road, will celebrate the 29th pastoral anniversary of the Rev. James L. Clark and Mrs. Alethia Clark at 3 p.m. Sunday, April 20. Pastor Tony Reddick, pastor of New Shiloh MB Church of Savannah, Georgia, will be the speaker.

Church of God of Prophecy, 720 Boulevard Road, will hold a gospel singing featuring Eternal Harmony at 11 a.m. Sunday, April 27.

First Baptist Missionary Church HOLY WEEK schedule

THURSDAY 17 APRIL

MAUNDY THURSDAY 6:00 PM

FRIDAY 18 APRIL

Youth Easter Egg Hunt 5:30 PM

SUNDAY 20 APRIL

SUNRISE SERVICE 6:30 AM
Breakfast After Service

SUNDAY 20 APRIL

EASTER SERVICES 9:00 AM Sunday School
9:45 AM Worship Services

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Rev. George P. Windley, Jr., Pastor

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www.sumterfirstag.org
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Small Groups: Sundays at 6 pm
Small Groups: Wednesdays at 7 pm - Adults, Royal Rangers, Girls Rooted in Truth & Spirit

Baptist - Missionary

First Baptist Missionary Church

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Rev. George P. Windley, Jr.
Sunday School 10:00 am
Sunday 11:00 am, in person
and live stream on
YouTube and Facebook
Wednesday Bible Study 7:00 pm on Zoom
Please check our websitefbmcsumter.org for more information or call the church Tuesday through Thursday 10:00 am to 1:00 pm.

Jehovah Missionary Baptist Church

609 Manning Ave. • 803.775.4032
Marion H. Newton
Sunday Worship: 8:30 am
Wednesday Bible Study - Online YouTube

Salem Missionary Baptist Church

320 West Fulton Street
803-775-8054
Reverend Dr. Cartrell Woods, Jr. Pastor
Sun. School 9:00 am
Praise Worship 9:55 am
Worship 10:00 am

Catholic - Roman

Saint Anne and Saint Jude Roman Catholic Church

1855 Beckwood Rd
Sumter, SC. 29153
803-773-9244
Mass times:
Saturday: Vigil Mass 5:00pm
Sunday: 8:00am, 10:00am, 12:00pm
(Spanish) 5:00pm

Church of Christ

Plaza Church of Christ
1402 Camden Hwy. • 905-3163
Sunday School: 10 am
Sunday Worship: 11 am & 6 pm
Wed. Bible Class: 7 pm

Episcopal

Church of the Good Shepherd

401 Dingle Street
Sunday Worship: First and Third Sunday
9:30am

Interdenominational

Love Covenant Church

245 Oswego Hwy, Sumter
803-775-7605
Tommy and Angela Frederick, Pastors
Sunday Worship 11am
Thursday Evening 7pm
www.lovecovenantchurch.com

Spiritual Life Christian Center

4710 Broad Street * 968-5771
Randolph & Minerva Paige, Pastors
Sunday Worship: 11:00 am
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:00 pm
www.spiritualifecenter.com

Lutheran - ELCA

St James Lutheran Church

1137 Alice Dr, Sumter
773-2260 / www.stjamessumter.org
Rev. Scott Landrum
Adult Sunday School: 9:00 am
Sunday Worship: 10:00 am
Contemporary Service: 11:30 am

Non-Denominational

Christ Community Church (CCC)

320 Loring Mill Rd., Sumter
www.cccsumter.com
803-905-7850
Sunday Worship 8:08, 9:30 & 11:00 am
Greater St. Paul Church
200 Watkins Street • 803-778-1355
Founder Bishop W.T. English
Sunday School - 10:30 am
Sunday Morning Worship - 11:30 am
Wed. Mid Week Service - 7:30 pm

The Rock Church of Sumter

365 N. Saint Paul Church Rd
803-494-7625 (ROCK)
Pastor Gwendolyn Credle
Sunday School 9:30 am
Worship 11:00 am
Wed. Bible Study 7:00 pm
Sumter Bible Church

420 South Pike West, Sumter
803-773-8339 • Pastor Ron Davis
Sunday School 10:00 am
Worship 11:00 am & 6:30 pm
Wed. Bible Study & Prayer 7:00 pm

Pentecostal

First United Pentecostal Church

14 Plowden Mill Rd • 775-9493
Pastor Theron Smith
Sunday Service: 10:00 am & 6:30 pm
Wednesday Bible Study: 7:30 pm

Sumter First Pentecostal Holiness Church

2609 McCray's Mill Rd. • 481-8870.
Brett Gardner, Pastor
Sunday School: 10:00 am
Sunday Worship: 10:45 am
Wed. Bible Study/Youth Group: 6:30 p.m.

Presbyterian - ARP

Mayesville Presbyterian Church
109 W. Sumter St, Mayesville
803-453-5759 / www.mayesvillepres.org.
Rev. Brian C. Peake, Pastor
Worship Service 11:00 am
Sunday School 10:00 a.m.

Presbyterian USA

First Presbyterian Church of Sumter
9 W Calhoun St (at Main St.)
(803) 773-3814 • info@fpcsumter.org
"Classes for all ages" 9:30 am
Hospitality & Fellowship (Fellowship Hall) 10:10 a.m.
Worship (Sanctuary) 10:30 a.m.



GALA FROM PAGE A1

Dreams, and the award recipients exemplify it. Below are the winners and categories they are from in the order they were announced.

Nonprofit of the Year went to Tandem Health. Tandem is a federally qualified health center that addresses health care accessibility and affordability in the county. The nonprofit operates six patient service locations, a dedicated dental site, two school-based health centers and an administrative office.

In 2023, they served 18,732 unique patients, of which 74.6% were racial and ethnic minorities. Offering a fee based on a patient's income and household size, Tandem offers care for those without insurance and those with private insurance, Medicare and Medicaid.

Military Citizen of the Year went to the Flight Chief of the Operational Medicine Flight Jessica Pownell. Pownell leads 52 medical professionals across three clinics, and off duty she is a member of the Dalzell-Shaw Air Force Base



David Eargle is the Chamber's chairman for 2025-26.

than 400 miles to support the American Legion Legacy Run.

Educator of the Year goes to four educators: elementary educator, middle school, high school and collegiate.

Elementary Educator of the Year went to Denise Robinson, the media specialist at Willow Drive Elementary School. As a leader in the Sumter School District Teacher Forum, she organized Teacher Forum Hill Days where teachers observe legislative sessions and engage with lawmakers. She also collaborated with the Palmetto State Teachers Association to offer teachers opportunities to attend state education board meetings, allowing them to advocate for their profession.

Robinson has also organized meet the candidates events before Sumter School District elections and has encouraged teachers to attend school board meetings. She also served on the committee



PHOTOS BY JANEL PRZYBYLA / THE SUMTER ITEM

The Philip L. Edwards Business Person of the Year award went to David Durham with First Citizens Bank.

to revise the district's discipline code to ensure it aligned with student needs.

Middle School Educator of the Year went to Robert Easley, an eighth-grade science teacher at Hillcrest Middle School. Easley has brought many STEM opportunities to his students. Recently, his students got the opportunity to speak with an astronaut aboard the International Space Station after they won a rover-building competition at The Citadel.

He applied for, and secured, a grant at NASA's Plant the Moon challenge, where students grew vegetables in lunar regolith simulant, directly contributing to NASA's Artemis program. He also volunteers with his students outside of the classroom and expands learning opportunities for all students.

During his acceptance speech, Easley said his students come to him every day excited to tackle something new, and many are thinking about pursuing STEM careers in the future because of how much they have enjoyed learning in his class.

High School Educator of the Year went to Erik Hines, an orchestra teacher at Sumter High School. For 19 years, Hines has fostered a love of music in his students, and under his leadership, the Sumter High Orchestra has grown to more than 120 students. At the South Carolina Music Educators Association Concert Performance Assessment, Hines' students have earned 14 consecutive superior ratings as well as three more for overall program achievement.

Annually, Hines holds more than eight public concerts, including season-



The Athena Women's Leadership award was awarded to Erika Williams with Sumter EDGE.



Robert Easley, an eighth-grade science teacher at Hillcrest Middle School, won the Chamber's Middle School Educator of the Year award.

al performances at Sumter Opera House. For 15 years, he has been part of the after-school REACH program for string instruments, providing young students with the opportunity to explore and develop their musical talents. Hines is also a past president of SCMEA Orchestra Division.

Collegiate Educator of the Year went to Jennifer Tyree, a biology professor at Central Carolina Technical College. Serving on both the main Sumter campus and the remote Kershaw County campus, Tyree has worked on a variety of programs including nursing, surgical technology and environmental biology.

Outside of the classroom, Tyree has supported the college's biology club, participating in college-wide events and organizing community service projects. Tyree has also changed the overall education experience at CCTC by creating and updating the department-wide basic anatomy and physiology course.

Young Professional of the Year went to Tiffany Reed. Reed arrived in Sumter in 2007 when she answered the call to serve the U.S. Air Force as a security service member. After completing her service, she made Sumter her home

and became an integral part of the community. She has served as a Girl Scout leader, a PTA board member at Alice Drive Elementary School, a Sunday school teacher and a pre-school substitute to name a few.

Even after all of her volunteer efforts, Reed started another one: a custom cake business to ensure families in need can experience the gift of a beautifully decorated cake just like she wanted as a child. Going from a stay-at-home mom to a single mother, Reed spent five years at the Department of Juvenile Justice working as a dispatcher in high-conflict situations. Reed went on to become the SVP program coordinator within the S.C. Department of Corrections.

The Athena Women's Leadership Award went to Erika Williams with Sumter EDGE. Williams recognized several gaps which needed to be addressed while working on marketing Sumter as one of the best places to do business. Williams was instrumental in uniting the 28 organizations focused on workforce development and talent acquisition in Sumter. By bringing them together, she created the eighth-grade manufacturing expo and launched the award-winning eSTEAM Sumter festival — the third-largest of its kind in the state.

Williams also developed the Ross McKenzie Emerging Leaders Program, allowing 11th-graders of Sumter and Lee counties the opportunity to engage in leadership training. She serves on the Lee County Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors, the Sumter County Litter Advisory Board and is involved in the Sumter Chamber's education committee, among many others.

The Philip L. Edwards Business Person of the Year award went to David Durham with First Citizens Bank. As of 2024, he was the only person in his company's history to be awarded the Best Banker of the company's top performers every year during his 27 years there.

Durham has navigated the ever-changing landscape of his industry, all while giving back to his community, serving on boards and sponsoring events.

The Chairman's Award, given to someone dedicated to the Chamber of Commerce, went to Kim Hatchell.

Hatchell has served two years as chairman of the board for Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce and always steps up to the plate when something needs to be done, former Chamber Chair Baker said.

After the awards ceremony, the evening was accented by the band Terence Lonon and The Untouchables, sponsored by First Citizens Bank, alongside drinks and a meal.



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Faith Strong invites all to wear pink to council meeting to petition members to help it raise awareness of breast cancer

STAFF REPORT

A Sumter group that focuses on support for those fighting breast cancer and their families and caregivers is asking all in Sumter who have been affected by breast cancer to wear pink to a Sumter City Council meeting.

Faith Strong BREASTies Support Group asks cancer fighters, survivors and advocates to help petition city council on Tuesday, April 14, at 5:30 p.m. Council meets at 21 N. Main St. on the fourth floor of Sumter Opera House.

The group wants to ask council to honor the first Saturday of October as "Pink in the City" for Sumter, request to decorate Main and Liberty streets during October with pink breast cancer ribbons and create more platforms and events in Sumter throughout the year regarding breast cancer. "Each year



Faith Strong hosts their annual community event at the Sumter Civic Center to celebrate their survivors, thrivers and metavivors while advocating and bringing awareness," according to a news release from the group about the petition event. "The purpose of this gathering is to advocate and bring more awareness to Sumter and residents impact-

ed by breast cancer."

Minister Tamekia Hunter Ross, founder of the nonprofit, is asking the community to join its BREASTies and board members in attending the city council meeting.

"As someone who has been thriving through Stage 4 Metastatic Breast Cancer since November 2018 and doing ongoing chemotherapy for 6 1/2

years, one of our primary focus is to not only prevent breast cancer but prevent recurrence. Since this diagnosis, it has taught me that doing ongoing treatment for Stage 4 Metastatic Breast Cancer is not for the weak. You must be strong in your faith and have a great support system, including a support group to help you keep the faith and trust God as you fight daily to live through a disease doctors have no cure for. A lot of times, dedication and hard work goes on behind the scenes to network in finding resources and holistic options to provide to the BREASTies monthly so they will never have to go through what I am currently going through for Stage 4 Metastatic Breast Cancer. It's a lot of information available, but it's the little things that mean the most that can be incorporated in our daily living to prevent a recurrence and/or a

Stage 4 diagnosis," said Hunter Ross.

Faith Strong serves more than 100 BREASTies in Sumter and surrounding areas who is considered a survivor (cancer free); thriver (actively in treatment) and/or metavivor (Stage 4 - ongoing treatments). The support group meets every third Saturday from noon to 2 p.m. at Victory Church, 5155 Patriot Parkway. The next scheduled fellowship is Saturday, April 19.

Faith Strong was founded December 2018 by Hunter Ross and Tammey Davis Patterson, who also was diagnosed with Stage 4 Metastatic Breast Cancer. It officially became a nonprofit in October 2022. For five years, Faith Strong has been the only breast cancer support group in Sumter, according to the release. To learn more about the nonprofit and support group, visit www.wearefaithstrong.com.

Sumter High Chorus wins honors at national competition



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sumter High School Chorus visited Busch Gardens in Williamsburg, Virginia, as the only school representing South Carolina in the Music in the Parks national competition. The chorus earned a Superior Rating and took Second Place Overall. Senior Maryah McIntosh was awarded the Best Vocal Soloist for the entire competition.

S.C.'s highest court refuses to stop 2nd firing squad execution

COLUMBIA (AP) — South Carolina's highest court on Monday rejected the last major appeal from Mikal Mahdi, who is scheduled to die by firing squad later this week for the ambush killing of an off-duty police officer.

Mahdi's lawyers said his original attorneys put on a shallow case trying to spare his life that didn't call on relatives, teachers or people who knew him and ignored the impact of weeks spent in solitary confinement in prison as a teen.

But the state Supreme Court, in a unanimous decision, ruled that many of those arguments were made in earlier unsuccessful appeals and refused to stop Friday's scheduled execution so further hearings could be held.

Mahdi, who admitted killing an off-duty police officer in an ambush at the officer's Calhoun County shed, is the fifth person set to be executed in South Carolina in less than eight months. All made final appeals to the state Supreme Court, but all were rejected.

Mahdi has one more opportunity to live, by asking Republican Gov. Henry McMaster to reduce his sentence to life in prison without parole just minutes before his scheduled execution time. He is to be put to death with three bullets to the heart at 6 p.m. on April 11 at the Broad River Correctional Institution in Columbia.

But no South Carolina governor has offered clemency in the 47 executions carried out in the state since the death penalty resumed in the U.S. in 1976.

Mahdi, 41, was convicted of killing Orangeburg Public Safety officer James Myers in 2004, shooting him at least eight times, then burning his body. Myers' wife found him in the shed, which had been the backdrop to their wedding 15 months earlier.

Myers' shed was a short distance through the woods from a gas station where Mahdi tried but failed to buy gas with a stolen credit card and left behind a vehicle he had carjacked in Columbia. Mahdi was arrested afterward in

Florida while driving Myers' unmarked police pickup truck.

Mahdi also admitted to the killing three days earlier of Christopher Biggs, a Winston-Salem, North Carolina, convenience store clerk who was shot twice in the head as he checked Mahdi's ID. Mahdi was sentenced to life in prison for that killing.

Mahdi pleaded guilty to killing Myers, leaving a judge under South Carolina law to decide if he would be sentenced to death or life without parole.

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SUMTER'S BEDDING HEADQUARTERS





PHOTOS BY JANEL PRZYBYLA / THE SUMTER ITEM

From left, Young Professional of the Year Tiffany Reed, High School Educator of the Year Erik Hines, Collegiate Educator of the Year Jennifer Tyree, Philip L. Edwards Business Person of the Year David Durham, Military Personnel of the Year Flight Chief of the Operational Medicine Flight Master Sgt. Jessica Pownell, Middle School Educator of the Year Robert Easley, Tandem Health Board Chair Jodi Robbins for Nonprofit of the Year, Elementary Educator of the Year Denise Robinson, Tandem Health Director of Community Development Holly Chase for Nonprofit of the Year, Kim Hatchell with the Chairman's Award and Erika Williams with the Athena Women's Leadership award pose after the Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce awards ceremony on Thursday, April 3.



LEFT: Young Professional of the Year went to Tiffany Reed for her many service efforts in Sumter.

RIGHT: Cheryl Baker ended her time as Greater Sumter Chamber of Commerce chair on Thursday, April 3, and David Eargle will be the Chamber's 2025-26 chair.

Terence Lonon and The Untouchables perform at the annual awards ceremony on Thursday, April 3.



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OPINION

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COMMENTARY

President Trump seems bent on political self-harm

Is President Donald Trump bent on political self-harm? It often seems that way. His overall job approval rating still hovers within a point or two of the 50% popular vote he received last November. But he is losing support on the economy and inflation, the No. 1 issue last year, while his overwhelming success in reducing illegal immigration has reduced the salience of what was the No. 2 issue.

Meanwhile, he is taking positions that a critical majority of voters consider simple lunacy. A prime example is tariffs.

Tariffs make things cost more. If you slap a 25% tariff on imported automobiles, they will cost more than they used to, even if sellers absorb some of their increased costs. Sellers of American-made cars are likely to cost more, too. That's because sellers can raise their prices some distance even while gaining market share.

Voters understand this. And they don't enjoy price increases.

When the Biden administration's spending programs led to sharp price increases, voters were assured they were just "transitory." That turned out to be wrong. Prices never went back down.

More importantly, America had not experienced serious inflation since the 1970s, meaning no voter under 65 had any memory of facing sharply increasing prices.

Now the Trump administration is explaining that increased prices caused by tariffs will be temporary — another four-syllable word that starts with T. Voters seem skeptical, while investors seem spooked by the president's rapidly changing threats. Trump's job approval on the economy has tumbled.

America has not experienced sharp-

ly increasing tariff rates since the passage of the Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act in 1930. No voter has any memory of that.

We have seen an example of self-harm on policy: his attacks on Canada.

Did any voters expect Trump to set 25% tariffs on imports from Canada? Did any significant number want that? Did any Trump voter want to see Canada become the 51st state?

Trump's referring to former Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "Governor" may strike some as funny, but it amounted to political self-harm. Trudeau resigned, and now Pierre Poilievre's Conservative Party, once far ahead in polls, is essentially tied with the Liberals in the snap election



Michael Barone

called for April 28. Moreover, both parties are now pledging to retaliate with high tariffs on imports from the United States.

The fact is that the U.S. and Canada are pretty much one country economically and have been for a long time. We have our continuing trade disputes over softwood lumber and wheat marketing, which have simmered for years. Years ago, I looked into these issues and decided that the U.S. was right on one and Canada on the other, though I can't remember which was which now.

But over time, we've become more tightly linked. The germ of the 1993 North American Free Trade Agreement was the Canada-U.S. Automotive Products Agreement of 1965 — 60 years ago! — sought by the De-

troit-based Big Three (as they were then) automakers and Walter Reuther's United Auto Workers, then the leading creative force on the political left.

Before World War II, the Big Three had built a separate Canadian line of cars as they had in Europe. It made good sense to meld the supply chains and assembly plants over the Michigan-Ontario border (as it had over the Michigan-Ohio border) and to eliminate cross-border tariffs.

As a result, the Detroit Three's supply chains centered in Michigan extend east into Ontario just as they do south to Ohio and Indiana. This is of huge importance to Canada. About one-quarter of its foreign trade passes over the Detroit River on the Ambassador Bridge, and, given the bridge's age (it opened in 1929) and high tolls, the Canadian government is paying for the construction of the new Gordie Howe International Bridge.

Suddenly imposing tariffs on autos and parts crossing the U.S.-Canada border wreaks destructive havoc on the Detroit Three and its major suppliers on both sides. It threatens to put them at a commercial disadvantage to the foreign-based automakers whose assembly plants and supply chains extend south from Ohio and Indiana through Kentucky and Tennessee into South Carolina, Alabama and Mississippi.

The Trump tariffs also threaten to increase costs for purchasers of Detroit Three autos, who are concentrated geographically between the Appalachians and the Coast Range and politically among Trump and Republican voters. In my light, this policy is a textbook case of political self-harm.

Couple that with the president's attacks on Denmark and threats to nab

Greenland. Denmark has been a positive ally, raising its military spending to 2% of GDP. It's also one European country that has been tough on illegal immigration and strong in promoting assimilation. There's no reason to think Denmark and Greenland wouldn't collaborate with the U.S. on Arctic issues in which, because of Alaska, the U.S. is already involved.

In terms of trade, Trump's goal seems to be autarky: sealing off America from the world. In pursuit of that goal, he is willing to inflict huge, gratuitous damage. But as geopolitical analyst Peter Zeihan argues in "The Accidental Superpower: Ten Years On," with its enormous economy, isolated geography and post-fracking energy self-sufficiency, America is already closer to autarky than most advanced economies. Imports, as Obama administration economist Jason Furman notes, are only 10% of the U.S. economy.

Over the years, I've observed self-made millionaires with brilliant insights on some issues and absolutely lunatic ideas on others. The U.S. and the Republican Party have benefited from some of Trump's brilliant insights. We'll see whether they can endure the self-harm of his lunatic ideas.

Michael Barone is a senior political analyst for the Washington Examiner, resident fellow at the American Enterprise Institute and longtime co-author of *The Almanac of American Politics*. His new book, *Mental Maps of the Founders: How Geographic Imagination Guided America's Revolutionary Leaders*, is now available.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

IT'S A SHAME THE S.C. LEGISLATURE CAN'T BE BOLD

Did you know that the state General Assembly is currently working on a "Flat Tax" income tax rate of 3.99 percent for the state of South Carolina in 2026? This would be different from the current tax rates of zero percent, 3 percent and 6.2 percent rating residents now pay based on their income.

Did you also know the bearers of the burden for this new tax rate will be individuals earning between \$20K and \$150K a year? And that individuals who earn between \$50K and \$75K can expect to owe an additional \$596? You

will be OK if you earn less than \$20K and more than \$200K though.

Now it is not all bad news. There is a carrot of hope being dangled in front of us. It is projected that the tax rate will drop to 2.49 percent after an undetermined period of several years and as long as certain goals for the state's tax revenue are met. Yep, sure that is going to happen. Shame our state legislature can't be bold like other states and eliminate income tax completely.

DEAN PLUTE
Lynchburg



HAVE SOMETHING TO SAY? Send your letter to letters@theitem.com, drop it off at *The Sumter Item* office, 36 W. Liberty St., or mail it to *The Sumter Item*, P.O. Box 1677, Sumter, SC 29151, along with the writer's full name, address and telephone number (for verification purposes only). Letters that exceed 350 words will be cut accordingly in the print edition, but available in their entirety at www.theitem.com/opinion/letters_to_editor.

COMMENTARY

Tariffs, the goose, the gander and the American Dream

Let's give the tariffs time to work. I'm as anxious as you are since everything I have is tied to the stock market. If the stock market dies, I will be working or starving the rest of my life. Let's hope things settle down soon. I believe they will and will grow even bigger.

The tariffs make sense. If China charges us a 25% tariff, then it's only fair that we charge them one. The same goes for Canada, Mexico, Vietnam and all the others. If they want to charge us 40%, then it's only fair that we charge them the same. What is good for the goose is good for the gander.

Higher prices will come for a while. Car dealerships have seen a lot more people trying to make their deals before all

the tariffs are tacked on to the prices.

People are worried about buying cheap stuff from China at Walmart or any other country. I honestly don't want stuff from China. If China never ships another thing here it wouldn't bother me. Sadly, everything I own today is, in some way, likely tied to a foreign country.

When I was a kid, I had a transistor radio made in Hong Kong. I thought it was funny to have such an item made from so far away. Throughout the years it became the norm.

Cars, televisions, furniture, appliances and steel started coming from other places. Sadly, our American manufacturers were moving to Mexico or any country on the planet where they could find slave labor.

This turned into big profit for them because they shipped the goods cheaply back to the United States and made big profits. The problem was that those jobs were forever lost in America. The American workers had to go out and find jobs at Walmart and Starbucks making \$10 an hour, which today is more like \$15 to \$18. They had been used to making \$35 or \$40 an hour before their job moved out of America.

People are crying today about what might happen to the prices at Walmart. Unfor-

tunately, that's all Americans can afford today is Walmart. Americans are so poor that we have to rely on Dollar General or Walmart.

Back in the '50s, '60s and even '70s, people could go to one of the big cities in their state and find a good-paying manufacturing job. There were lots of jobs. We made a lot of cars, televisions, radios, clothes, furniture, steel, lumber and had coal mining and much more. These people made enough money to buy a house, buy two cars, buy food, raise their kids and have a real retirement after working 30 years. That was called the American dream.

Today the American dream is applying for disabled Social Security and then praying that you can afford to go to Walmart. Don't even think

about buying a new car, a new house or taking a vacation because on today's income it is not going to happen.

Let's try to keep breathing and see how these tariffs play out. We need jobs to come back to America. We need our own companies to come home. We need to buy our own American steel and make things here once again. If other countries will come to America and build their products here and hire our people, that will be a good thing.

Just maybe, in a few years, once again, people in America will dream again.

Find books by Glenn Mollette at [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com). Learn more about his books, columns and music at GlennMollette.com. Email gmollette@aol.com.



Savory slow cooker pork chili is perfect for a cool spring night

BY FAMILY FEATURES

If you need a break from the kitchen, the slow cooker is a perfect tool to make dinner a breeze. This Barbecue Chili recipe from "Cookin' Savvy" offers a hearty meal that serves a crowd.

Visit *Culinary.net* to find more family friendly dinner inspiration and step-by-step recipe videos.

BARBECUE CHILI

Recipe courtesy of "Cookin' Savvy"
Servings: 8-10

- 1 pork loin (2-3 pounds)
- 1 can (10 ounces) diced tomatoes and green chilies
- 2 cups barbecue sauce, divided
- 1 cup water
- 1 can (29 ounces) tomato sauce
- 2 cans (27 ounces each) chili beans

- 1 package chili seasoning
 - 1 tablespoon barbecue seasoning
 - 1 tablespoon onion powder
 - 1 tablespoon garlic powder
 - salt, to taste
 - pepper, to taste
 - sour cream, for serving
 - shredded cheddar cheese, for serving
 - corn chips, for serving
- Place pork loin in slow cooker. Cover with diced tomatoes and green chilies, 1 cup barbecue sauce and water; cook on low 4-6 hours.
- Cut up cooked meat and place in Dutch oven along with juices from slow cooker. Add remaining barbecue sauce, tomato sauce, chili beans, chili seasoning, barbecue seasoning, onion powder and garlic powder. Season with salt and pepper, to taste.
- Cook over medium heat 20 minutes, stirring occasionally. Serve with sour cream, shredded cheese and corn chips.
- Tip: Add can of beans if serving bigger crowd.

Chambers to talk on Infantry series at Sumter Genealogical Society meeting

SUBMITTED

The next membership meeting of Sumter County Genealogical Society will be held on Monday, April 21, beginning at 7 p.m. in the fellowship hall of Swan Lake Presbyterian Church, 912 Haynsworth St. Refreshments will be served following the speaker's presentation.

The speaker will be Herbert "Bing" Chambers. His discussion continues the talk on his Infantry series "And Were The Glory of Their Times," and since his last presentation to the SCGS, he published two more books. Chambers authored several books in this series that began with his researching Civil War deaths. That research led to his discovery of about 3,000 casualties that were officially documented during the war. "These men fought for and gave their lives for a cause they believed in," Chambers said. Some were young and unmarried, and others went off to battle, leaving wives and children behind, and they came home.

The society meets monthly from September through May. Visitors are welcome to attend. Admission is free to the public. Interested persons can join the society. Membership includes four newsletters during the year and free use of Sumter County Genealogical Society Research Center.

Annual dues are \$30 for an individual membership and \$35 for a family. Readers can call the society's Research Center for additional information at (803) 774-3901.

Girlfriend tires of boorish man's wandering eye

DEAR ABBY: I have been with my boyfriend for 3 1/2 years. Before me, he was known for sleeping around. He has never cheated on me that I am aware of, but when we go to social gatherings (or just out), he flirts with other women. If there is another woman in the room, he keeps his eyes on her like I can't see it happening.



Dear Abby
ABIGAIL VAN BUREN

When I told him several times that it really bothered me, he said I was overreacting. When he drinks, it's 10 times worse. I'm trying to let it go, but it hurts my feelings deeply. In his mind, it's OK that we hang out with women

he has been to bed with. He says it's no big deal. How do I learn to deal with all of this and be happy? I just want the respect I deserve.

GIRLFRIEND OF MR. POPULAR

DEAR GIRLFRIEND: If you want the respect you deserve, find a man who has some respect for women. Clearly your boyfriend does not. If he cared about your feelings, he wouldn't ogle other women while the two of you are out together. Doing so after you told him how it affected you is rude and inconsiderate.

I know you have invested a lot of time in this person, but he isn't going to change. Unless you want to perhaps be married to a womanizer with a drinking problem, end the romance now. (And once that's done, ask your doctor to test you for STDs.)

DEAR ABBY: My husband's daughter lives in another state. When COVID hit, her youngest was still in school. When they closed down, the girl didn't own a laptop or tablet (and the school didn't provide one), so she couldn't do her schoolwork. We offered to provide her with a tablet and run it through our phone plan so she had access if their Wi-Fi got bogged down or didn't work.

Fast-forward to today: That child is out of high school and no longer lives at home. Her mom has possession of the tablet and uses it regularly. She has a good job and could take over the plan. I'm still paying for her internet access and have paid for that tablet many times over with just the monthly access fee. On top of that, Mom doesn't make much effort to keep in contact with her dad or me. Months go by with no phone calls or texts,

and the last time I dialed her number, I got a message that made it sound like she had blocked my number. Phone calls from her dad go unanswered.

I want to shut down the line the tablet is connected to, but I know when she figures it out, she'll call raging that it was a gift. However, it was a gift to her DAUGHTER, not to her. Must I keep paying to keep peace, or shut it down?

MIFFED STEPMOM

DEAR STEPMOM: I can see why you might be miffed. Your husband's daughter is distant and not interested in fostering a relationship with her father or you. Discuss this with your husband. Because his daughter has a job and can afford to pay the monthly access fee, there is no logical reason why you should be footing the bill.

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Spring is in full swing now with Easter egg hunts, plant sales, festivals and more events coming up in the area

To make a submission to our events list, email pressrelease@theitem.com with EVENTS in the subject line.

SUMTER COUNTY

Set up camp at 2 p.m. Friday, April 11, in the beauty of Poinsett State Park, 6660 Poinsett Park Road in Wedgefield, and paddle through the waters of Sparkleberry Swamp, weaving through cypress trees and spotting diverse wildlife with **Destination Kayak**. "Join our guided hike to forage for natural firemaking materials and master the ancient art of starting a primitive fire with flint. Continue the excitement by kayaking around the captivating Plantation Islands of the Santee National Wildlife Refuge, discovering hidden gems along the way. Finally, trek through the Cuddo Unit, where picturesque views, lush scenery and abundant wildlife promise an unforgettable hiking experience." Visit the link for full details and booking: <https://tinyurl.com/yb86upep>.

Festival on the Avenue, celebrating the South Sumter community through the traditions of African American culture including family, food and the arts, is back from Thursday, April 10, to Saturday, April 12. The annual festival was originally based on the Bimbé Celebration, a West African Festival of Harvest during which villages gather to give thanks through dance, praise and feasting. The event along Manning Avenue will include Heritage Night – Remembering the Past, the 11th-annual golf tournament at Crystal Lakes Golf Course, A Taste of Soul at the Manning Avenue Farmers Market, entertainment by Terence Young and Finesse, plus the annual parade on Saturday morning followed by food, fun and music from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. For more details, visit Festival on the Avenue on Facebook.

The **Fourth Edition: Women's Empowerment Brunch 2025: All Things Health, Mind, Body, Soul** will be held from 11 a.m. until 3 p.m. on Saturday, April 12, at the Morris College gymnasium. Doors open at 10 a.m. Tickets are \$50. The charge for vendors is \$100. Contact Dr. Linda Jackson at (843) 598-8210. Jackson will serve as host of the event with Dr. Lenore Jackson serving as co-host. The guest speaker will be the Rev. Cecilia "CeCe" Armstrong. Call Jackson at (843) 598-9210 for



Sumter County Recreation Department will host an Easter Egg Hunt & Family Afternoon on Monday, April 14, with safety information for families.

more information.

Sumter County Recreation Department will be hosting an **Easter Egg Hunt & Family Afternoon** on Monday, April 14, beginning at 4 p.m. This is a free family event and will be held at Patriot Park, 380 General Drive, on Soccer Field 1, Sumter. In addition, Sumter County Sheriff's Office will be on site providing safety awareness, and SAFE Kids Sumter County will be on site conducting car seat safety checks. For more information, call (803) 436-2248 or email chambers@sumtercountysc.gov.

Love shrimp? This feast's for you. Sumter Museum's 23th-annual **Shrimp Feast** featuring shrimp prepared a variety of ways is returning from 6 to 9 p.m. Thursday, April 24, at the museum, 122 N. Washington St. Tickets are \$50 members; \$75 non-members. Purchase tickets at <https://tinyurl.com/432t2szp>. Also, don't miss out on the museum's Silent Auction in McKenzie Hall. Bid on incredible items and take home something special. Also, try your luck in the 50/50 drawing — winner takes half the pot.



Support veterans through the Wounded Warrior Project and Air Force Wounded Warrior Program and get some exercise at the same time at the **Wounded Warrior 5K** at Patriot Park. Race day is Saturday, April 26, beginning at 8 a.m. with check-in at the park at 380 General Drive. Race begins at 9 a.m. The first 300 total participants who register will receive a T-shirt, Wounded Warrior bracelets, bib and Fleet Feet of Augusta goody bag. All money from signups will go toward the two veterans' projects. Register for \$30 at <https://tinyurl.com/2psfve6s>.

It's time to start planning float entries for the **Sumter Iris Festival Parade**. This year's parade will be held Saturday, May 17, at 10 a.m. with the theme "Purple Wonder." If your school, civic club, church or business would like an application, please visit irisfestival.org, or contact Gail Hyatt at (803) 983-3916, or via email, gailhyatt@sc.rr.com. Deadline for entry is Friday, April 25. The parade kicks off the weekend days of the annual Iris Festival, held each year in May. This year's festival falls earlier, before Memorial Day weekend, and includes four days of good food, plenty of shopping opportunities, games and rides for the kids and the young at heart, plants to beautify your

garden and much more. It all begins with the annual Taste at the Gardens on Thursday, May 15. Look for more information on the annual event at <https://tinyurl.com/bdhtv48y> and closer to the festival in *The Item* and Lakeside magazine.

The 15th-annual **Daffodil Arts and Crafts Show** will be held May 17-18 in the Fair Memorial Building, 30 Artillery Drive. Hours will be 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Saturday and noon-4 p.m. Sunday. The event will support K.A.T.S Special Kneads, Toys for Tots, Pack 339, Troops 339 and Second Chance Animal Shelter. Free parking and free admission. Please bring non-perishable food items for Sumter United Ministries. Three items get your name entered into a drawing for a \$25 giftcard. The craft/vendor lists includes A&R Crafts, Bows & More, Cornerstone Creations, Crafts by Madi, Dan's Woodworks, Debbie's Birdfeeders, Donna's Arts and Crafts, Embellished Art Decor, Everything Paper, Haley Brooke Design's, K.A.T.S Special Kneads, Kit's Handmade Baskets, LGM Crafts, Pack 339, Reeca's Gifts, RK Art, Scentsy Independent consultant, The Hickory Nut, TLEC Creations, Tree of Liberty Crafts and Troop 339. The event is sponsored by K.A.T.S Special Kneads Small Animal Shelter, 3845 Highway 15 N., Sumter, (803) 469-3906. For more information, call Debra at (803) 983-3235.

CAMDEN

Join the Camden Archives & Museum for **Easter at Aberdeen!** Celebrate Easter with an Easter egg hunt for children 12 and under, light refreshments outside, an open house and outdoor activities for all to enjoy! Join in the free family fun at Aberdeen, 1409 Broad St., Camden. There will be three timed Easter egg hunts (10 a.m., 10:30 a.m. and 11 a.m.). A special toddler Easter egg hunt zone will be set up again for 3 and under participants. Easter baskets will be provided. We will have a craft table and bubbles station set up in the front yard. Easter

bunny ears, temporary tattoo station and lots of fun. Email questions to programming@simplyrevolutionary.com.

CLARENDON COUNTY



The **Annual Clarendon County Master Gardeners' Tomato Sale** will be held from 9 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Good Friday, April 18, at the Land, Parker & Welch Courtyard near the corner of West Keitt and South Mill streets, Manning. Dozens of tomato plant varieties will be on sale, including popular heirloom varieties. Shop early for the best selection of tomato plants including Sun Gold, Verona, Brandy Wine, Big Beef, Cherokee Purple and Juliet Roma.

The Annual Clarendon County Master Gardeners' Plant Sale

will be held from 9 a.m. until 5 p.m. on Friday, May 2, and from 9 a.m. until noon on Saturday, May 3, at the Land, Parker & Welch Courtyard near the corner of West Keitt and South Mill street, Manning. Stan the "Citrus Man" will be on hand answering questions and suggesting the best varieties for the planting area. Annuals, perennials and "pass-along" plants will be on sale. Hundreds of plants will be on sale, but don't wait. The best varieties sell out fast.

COLUMBIA

Midlands Plant & Flower Festival offering a variety of plants, flowers, horticulture and agriculture products, equipment, lawn and garden decor and more will be held Thursday-Sunday, April 10-13, at South Carolina State Farmers Market, 3483 Charleston Highway, West Columbia. Hours are Thursday-Saturday, 8 a.m.-6 p.m. and Sunday, 10 a.m.-5 p.m. Free admission and parking. Vendors can contact Sonia Brazell at (803) 737-4614 or sbrazell@scca.sc.gov.

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NOTICE OF PUBLIC HEARING

CDBG 2024 JOINT PLANNING GRANT APPLICATION

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN that on Wednesday, April 23, 2025, at 6:00 pm, the Santee-Lynches Regional Council of Governments, on behalf of Sumter County, will hold a public hearing at 3219 Broad St, Sumter SC 29150. This Public Hearing concerns an application to be submitted to the South Carolina Department of Commerce, Grants Administration on or about May 5, 2025, for a Community Development Block Grant, Sumter County is requesting \$50,000 to carry out the following activities:

- Development of Administrative project management and planning capacities to identify community needs, proposed goals and objectives, and develop COG staff capacity and carry out local government CDBG projects.

This Public Hearing and the matters to be discussed are subject to the provisions of the Citizen Participation Plans, developed in anticipation of participation in the State of South Carolina's Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, providing for the participation of the citizens of Sumter, Clarendon, Kershaw and Lee Counties in the planning and implementation of community and economic development projects which will involve CDBG funds.

The Citizen Participation Plans and the Application are available for review at the Sumter County Administrative Offices, between the hours of 9:00 am and 4:00 pm, Monday through Friday. Persons with questions or comments concerning the Public Hearing may contact Esmonde Levy, Government Services Director, Santee-Lynches Regional COG, 3219 Broad St, Sumter, SC, (803) 774-1406.

Sumter County does not discriminate on the basis of age, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status or disability in the admission of, access to, or treatment regarding employment in its federally assisted programs or activities.

On behalf of Santee Lynch Regional COG, Esmonde Levy, Government Services Director, has been designated to coordinate compliance with the non-discrimination requirements contained in the US Department of Housing and Urban Development regulations.

HOW CURRENT IS YOUR WILL?

Have you kept your Will current? Have you had or are you undergoing major life changes that warrant a Will review or change?

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Call Glenn at (803) 418-0800; ext. 108

GLENN F. GIVENS, ATTORNEY

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Think twice before bailing out of stock market, advisers say

NEW YORK (AP) — The huge swings rocking Wall Street and the global economy may feel far from normal. But, for investing at least, drops of this size have happened throughout history.

Stomaching them is the price investors have had to pay in order to get the bigger returns that stocks can offer over other investments in the long term. Here's a glimpse at what's behind the market's wild moves and what experts advise investors young and old to consider:

HOW BAD IS THE MARKET?

Wall Street's main benchmark, the S&P 500, has lost more than 16% since setting an all-time high on Feb. 19, mostly because of worries about President Donald Trump's tariffs.

Any kind of uncertainty around the economy will give Wall Street pause, but the trade war is making it more difficult for companies, households and others to feel confident enough to invest, spend and make long-term plans.

The tariffs announced on "Liberation Day" sent stocks reeling to their worst day since the COVID crash of 2020 because they were much harsher than investors had been expecting. They also raised the fear that Trump may push through with them to win long-term gains, such as more manufacturing jobs in the United States.

The hope among investors had been that Trump was using tariffs merely as a bargaining chip to win concessions from other countries. Some big names on Wall Street still think that's the case, and a moderation of tariffs would help stocks recover, but it's less of a certainty now.

STOCKS DO THIS OFTEN?

Regularly enough. The S&P 500 has seen declines of at least 10% every year or so. Often, experts view them as a culling of optimism that can otherwise run overboard, driving stock prices too high.

Before this recent downswing, many critics were saying the U.S. stock market was too expensive after prices rose faster than corporate profits. They also pointed to how only a handful of companies drove so much of the market's returns. A group of just seven Big Tech companies accounted for more than half of the S&P 500's total return last year, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices.

SHOULD I SELL AND GET OUT?

Any time an investor sees they're losing money, it feels bad. This recent run feels particularly unnerving because of how incredibly calm the market had previously been. The S&P 500 is coming off a second straight year where it shot up by more than 20%, the first time that's happened since baggy pants were last in style before the millennium.

Selling may offer some feeling of relief. But it also locks in losses and prevents the chance of making the money back over time. Historically, the S&P 500 has come back from every one of its downturns to eventually make investors whole again. That includes after the Great Depression, the dot-com bust and the 2020 COVID crash.

Some recoveries take longer than others, but experts often recommend not putting money into stocks that you can't afford to lose for several years, up to 10. Emergency funds, for things like home repairs or medical bills, should not be invested in stocks.

"Data has shown, historically, that no one can time the market," said Odysseas Papadimi-

trίου, CEO of WalletHub. "No one can consistently figure out the best time to buy and sell."

SHOULD I CHANGE ANYTHING?

For years, the U.S. stock market was the best by far to invest in worldwide. Now, more investors are questioning whether U.S. exceptionalism is dead.

But it could all be a reminder that investors often do best when they have a mixed set of investments rather than going all in on just a few. And investors may no longer be as diversified as they thought after years of sheer dominance by the Magnificent Seven over the U.S. stock market and by Wall Street over global markets.

"It is hard to roll with the punches when some days you feel like your portfolio is being pummeled," said Brian Jacobsen, chief economist at Annex Wealth Management. "But those moments should pass. A diversified strategy that is thoughtfully adapting to changing circumstances can't prevent the punches, but it can help soften the blows."

Phil Battin, CEO of Ambassador Wealth Management, advises investors to make sure they diversify their investments across regions and sectors to reduce risk. He says to lean towards "resilient sectors such as consumer staples, utilities and health care, which are less reliant on international trade."

WHAT IF I'M NEAR RETIREMENT?

Older investors have less time than younger ones to allow their investments to bounce back. But even in retirement, some people will need their investments to last 30 years or more, said Niladri "Neel" Mukherjee, chief investment officer of TIAA Wealth Management.

People who have already retired may want to cut back on spending and withdrawals after sharp market downturns because bigger withdrawals will remove more potential compounding ability in the future. But even retirees, at least in the early part of retirement, should still be invested in stocks to prepare for the possibility of decades of spending ahead.

"You may want to slow that down and pick that back up once the market recovers," Mukherjee said, "but it all comes down to having that conversation with your adviser and your portfolio manager."

I JUST STARTED INVESTING IN STOCKS. WHAT SHOULD I DO?

The proliferation of online trading platforms and the ease of smartphones has helped create a new generation of investors who may not be used to such volatility.

But the good news is younger investors often have the gift of time. With decades to go until retirement, they can afford to ride the waves and let their stock portfolios hopefully recover before compounding and eventually growing even bigger.

Stephen Kates, financial analyst at Bankrate, says "now is not the time to make emotional decisions." Young investors should "re-anchor to your (long-term) goals" and consider using a financial advisor to help navigate uncertain times.



MAIA CURTIS VIA AP
Rob Blackwell stands next to an EV he started leasing right before U.S. President Donald Trump announced expansive new import tariffs in Richmond, Virginia, on April 3.

U.S. consumers rush to buy big-ticket items before Trump's tariffs kick in

BY CLAIRE RUSH and MARK THIESSE
Associated Press

John Gutierrez had been thinking about buying a new laptop for the past year. The Austin, Texas, resident needed a computer with faster processing and increased storage for his photography work and had his sights set on a product from a Taiwanese brand.

Then President Donald Trump announced expansive new import tariffs Wednesday, including a 32% tax on imports from Taiwan. That same day, Gutierrez ordered the laptop, with a base price of \$2,400, from a retailer in New York specializing in photo and video gear.

"I thought I'd bite the bullet, buy it now, and then that way I'll have the latest technology on my laptop and don't have to worry about the tariffs," he said.

Gutierrez was among the U.S. consumers rushing to buy big-ticket items before the tariffs take effect. Economists say the tariffs are expected to increase prices for everyday items, warning of potentially weakened U.S. economic growth.

The White House hopes the tariffs prod countries to open their economies to more American exports, leading to negotiations that could reduce tariffs, or that companies increase their production in the U.S. to avoid higher import taxes.

Rob Blackwell and his wife needed a new car that could handle long drives from Arlington, Virginia, to their son's college. Their current electric vehicle is older with a limited range, and it will soon be used by his daughter, who is on the verge of getting her driver's license.

"I have been telling my wife that for some time we were going to need to do it," he said, "and I was watching to see what the president did with tariffs."

Blackwell wanted another EV, but said leasing made more economic sense because the technology is ever-changing. He had his eye on the new General Motors Optiq; it's an American car but made in Mexico, which could be subject to tariffs

on supply chains that might increase the cost.

After hearing that tariffs would be announced, they made plans the weekend before to lease the car. He said the dealership honored the agreement they worked out before the tariffs were finalized. And although he said the salespeople were a pleasure to deal with, Blackwell sensed a shift in their stance.

"They know what we know, which is suddenly it flips from a buyer's market to a seller's market very quickly," Blackwell said, adding that he is happy with his choice.

"It was just a simple rational decision," he said. "If this is what the government's going to do, I need to get my act together."

Lee Wochner, CEO of the Burbank, California-based Counterintuity marketing and strategy firm, also needed a new vehicle. He wanted a more presentable car for business meetings, but kept putting it off because of his busy work schedule.

On March 27, a Thursday, he told his firm's car broker: "Ed, I need a car pronto and it's got to happen by Sunday."

The broker gave him some car and pricing options and he leased an Audi Q3, which was delivered Sunday to his house by a nearby dealership.

A quick back-of-the-envelope calculation showed how much he saved by leasing before the tariffs were implemented. If he had waited, Wochner said, it would have cost about another \$4,300.

"One of the things my car broker said was that deals that were already written, some of the dealerships were ripping them up already and renegotiating them because they were afraid that they weren't going to be able to get enough new inventory at a price anybody would buy," he said.

He believes prices will continue to increase because the U.S. has lost the trust of the international trade market.

"If you need a new car, if you can get that pre-tariff deal still, you should go get it," he said, "because who knows what next Wednesday might be like."

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GUIDE TO THE iris festival

More than 70,000 will attend the 83rd Iris Festival at Sumter's Swan Lake, an event that has been ranked as one of the top 20 festivals in the Southeast.

Be a part of The Sumter Item's special publication and week-long coverage of the three day-event.

The publication will be distributed at the Iris Festival and will be featured on The Sumter Item's website, social media pages and daily email throughout the festival week as well as within the newspaper in the Weekend Edition before the festival kicks off.

deadline
April 10

publish date
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Thousands of Ukrainian civilians are still held by Russia with uncertain hope of release

BY DASHA LITVINOVA and HANNA ARHIROVA
Associated Press

When she heard her front door open almost two years ago, Kostiantyn Zinovkin's mother thought her son had returned home because he forgot something. Instead, men in balaclavas burst into the apartment in Melitopol, a southern Ukrainian city occupied by Russian forces.

They said Zinovkin was detained for a minor infraction and would be released soon. They used his key to enter, said his wife, Liusiena, and searched the flat so thoroughly that they tore it apart "into molecules."

But Zinovkin wasn't released. Weeks after his May 2023 arrest, the Russians told his mother he was plotting a terrorist attack. He's now standing trial on charges his family calls absurd.

Zinovkin is one of thousands of civilians in Russian captivity. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy insists their release, along with prisoners of war, will be an important step toward ending the 3-year-old war.

So far, it hasn't appeared in the agenda in U.S. talks with Moscow and Kyiv.

"While politicians discuss natural resources, possible territorial concessions, geopolitical interests and even Zelenskyy's suit in the Oval Office, they're not talking about people," said Oleksandra Matviichuk, head of the Center for Civil Liberties, which won the Nobel Peace Prize in 2022.

THOUSANDS HELD

In January, the center and other Ukrainian and Russian rights groups launched "People First," a campaign that says any peace settlement must prioritize the release of everyone they say are captives, including Russians jailed for protesting the war, as well as Ukrainian children who were illegally deported.

"You can't achieve sustainable peace without taking into account the human dimension," Matviichuk told The Associated Press.

It's unknown how many Ukrainian civilians are in custody, both in occupied regions and in Russia. Ukraine's human rights ombudsman Dmytro Lubinets in 2023 estimated over 20,000.

Matviichuk says her group received over 4,000 requests to help civilian detainees. She notes it's against international law to detain noncombatants in war.

Oleg Orlov, co-founder of the Russian rights group Memorial, says advocates know at least 1,672 Ukrainian civilians are in Moscow's custody.

"There's a larger number of them that we don't know about," added Orlov, whose organization won the Nobel alongside Matviichuk's group and is involved in People First.

DETAINED WITHOUT CHARGES

Many are detained for months without charges and don't know why they're being



Liusiena Zinovkina, 32, sits in her room in Berlin, Germany, on March 19. She fled to Germany from Ukraine, where her husband was arrested by invading Russian forces in May 2023.

ASSOCIATED PRESS

held, Orlov said.

Russian soldiers detained Mykyta Shkriabin, then 19, in Ukraine's Kharkiv region in March 2022. He left the basement where his family was sheltering from fighting to get supplies and never returned.

Shkriabin was detained even though he wasn't charged with a crime, said his lawyer, Leonid Solovyov. In 2023, the authorities began referring to him as a prisoner of war, a status Solovyov seeks to contest since the student wasn't a combatant.

Shkriabin's mother, Tetiana, told AP last month she still doesn't know where her son is held. In three years, she's received two letters from him saying he's doing well and that she shouldn't worry.

She's hoping for "a prisoner exchange, a repatriation, or something," Shkriabina said. Without hope, "how does one hang in there?"

TERRORISM, TREASON AND ESPIONAGE

Others face charges that their relatives say are fabricated.

After being seized in Melitopol, Zinovkin was jailed for over two years and charged with seven offenses, including plotting a terrorist attack, assembling weapons and high treason, his wife, Liusiena Zinovkina, told AP, describing the charges as "absurd."

While vocally pro-Ukrainian and against Russia's occupation, her husband couldn't plot to bomb anyone and had no weapons skills, she said.

Especially nonsensical is the treason charge, she said, because Russian law stipulates that only its citizens can be charged with that crime, and Zinovkin has never held Russian citizenship, unless it was forced upon him in jail. A conviction could bring life in prison.

Ukrainian civilian Serhii Tsyhipa, 63, was convicted of espionage and sentenced to 13 years in a maximum-security prison after he disappeared in March 2022 while walking his dog in Nova Kakhovka in the partially occupied Kherson region, said his wife, Olena. The dog also vanished.

Tsyhipa, a journalist, was wearing a jacket with a large red cross sewn on it. Both he and his wife, Olena, had those jackets, she told AP, because

they volunteered to distribute food and other essentials when Russian troops invaded.

Serhii Tsyhipa protested the occupation, and Olena believes that led to his arrest.

He was held for months in Crimea and finally charged with espionage in December 2022. Almost a year later, in October 2023, Tsyhipa was convicted and sentenced in a trial that lasted only three hearings.

He appealed, but his sentence was upheld. "But the Russian authorities must understand that we are fighting — that we are doing everything possible to bring him home," she said.

Mykhailo Savva of the Expert Council of the Center for Civil Liberties said rights advocates know of 307 Ukrainian civilians convicted in Russia on criminal charges — usually espionage or treason, if the person held a Russian passport, but also terrorism and extremism.

He said that in Ukraine's occupied territories, Russians see activists, community leaders and journalists as "the greatest threat."

Winning release for those already serving sentences would be an uphill battle, advocates say.

HELD IN HARSH CONDITIONS

Relatives must piece together scraps of information about prison conditions.

Zinovkina said she has received letters from her husband who told her of problems with his sight, teeth and back. Former prisoners also told her of cramped, cold basement cells in a jail in Rostov, where he's being held.

She believes her husband was pressured to sign a confession. A man who met him in jail told her Kostiantyn "confessed to everything they wanted him to, so the worst is over" for him.

Orlov said Ukrainian POWs and civilians are known to be held in harsh conditions, where allegations of abuse and torture are common.

A recent report by the U.N. Human Rights Council's commission of inquiry on Ukraine said Russia "committed enforced disappearances and torture as crimes against humanity," part of a "system-

atic attack against the civilian population and pursuant to a coordinated state policy."

It said Russia "detained large numbers of civilians," jailed them in occupied Ukraine or deported them to Russia and "systematically used torture against certain categories of detainees to extract information, coerce and intimidate."

The Kremlin tested those methods during the two wars it waged in Chechnya in the 1990s and 2000s, well before invading Ukraine, said Orlov, who recently went to Ukraine to document Russia's human rights violations and saw the pattern repeated from the North Caucasus conflicts.

"Essentially, a misanthropic system has been created, and everyone who falls into it ends up in hell," added Matviichuk, the Ukrainian human rights advocate.

Russia's Defense Ministry, the Federal Penitentiary Service and the Federal Security Service did not respond to requests for comment.

TEMPERING HOPE WITH PATIENCE

As the U.S. talks about a ceasefire, relatives continue to press for the captives' release.

Liusiena Zinovkina says she hasn't abandoned hope as her husband, now 35, stands trial but is tempering her expectations.

"I see that it's not as simple as the American president thought. It's not that easy to come to an agreement with Russia," she said, reminding herself "to be patient. It will happen, but not tomorrow."

Olena Tsyhipa said every minute counts for her husband, whose health has deteriorated.

"My belief in his return is unwavering," she said. "We just have to wait."

CITY OF SUMTER BUSINESS LICENSES

The City of Sumter Ordinance regulating licenses for City businesses states that "Every person engaged or intending to engage in any business, calling, occupation, profession, or activity with the object of gain, benefit, or advantage, in whole or in part within the limits of the City of Sumter, South Carolina is required to pay an annual license tax for the privilege of doing business and to obtain a business license."

"The required business license tax shall be paid for each business subject thereto according to the applicable rate classification on or before the 30th day of April each year."

A 5% PENALTY WILL BE ASSESSED ON ALL LICENSE TAX WHICH ARE NOT PAID BY THE 30TH OF APRIL, AND AN ADDITIONAL 5% PENALTY WILL BE ASSESSED ON THE FIRST OF EACH MONTH THAT THE LICENSE TAX REMAINS UNPAID.

If any license tax shall remain unpaid for sixty (60) days after its due date, the Business License Department shall issue an execution which shall constitute a lien upon the property of the licensee for the tax, penalties, and costs of collection."

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HALL OF FAME

FROM PAGE A1

dates to 1855, and was the fourth Osteen to be inducted into South Carolina Press Association's Hall of Fame at its annual News Contest awards ceremony on Friday, April 4.

Osteen Jr. grew up surrounded by the heartbeat of a newsroom — his father and grandfather actively publishing *The Item* with a mission to tell the stories that matter to the community. As he came of age, that mission mattered to him, too.

By age 13, he was spending summers working at the family paper, going on to earn journalism degrees from University of Missouri and Columbia University, with a three-year tour in between that took him from California to Korea to Vietnam as an information officer. In that role, he worked alongside some of the most respected journalists from around the world, deepening his respect for the profession and its people.

His love for newspapers extended way beyond the headlines to the people who made them, from hundreds of fresh-faced reporters filtering through the Sumter newsroom chasing their first byline to veteran pressmen working with ink-stained hands and hearts.

He joined *The Item* full time in 1963 and quickly moved through every corner of the newsroom, from writer to editor to photographer to mentor. In 1987, he followed in his father's footsteps, being named publisher.

Under his leadership, that Osteen Publishing legacy expanded beyond Sumter to throughout South Carolina, Florida, New Mexico, Alabama and New York.

Though among the generation of iconic American journalists who spearheaded the change of the journalism trade, from linotype to the current digital age, the values Osteen Jr. held near and dear have stood steadfast. Accuracy, integrity and heart — he was as much a teacher as he was a publisher, modeling such qualities for his three sons and grandchildren.

He served as past president of S.C. Press Association, sharing his knowledge and passion with journalists and publications across the state.

As friends, family and fellow journalists listened to his words, watched his legacy in human form take center stage, sharing anecdotes of what it was like to know Osteen Jr., it became clear that the Osteen legacy lies not just in printed pages, but also in the communities served, lives impacted and the belief that local journalism matters.

"It's truly an honor for my father to join his own father, grandfather and great-grandfather in the S.C. Press Hall of Fame. He's most deserving, as newspapers were his life's passion," said Osteen Publishing Co-owner Jack Osteen.

Osteen Jr. passed away in 2020 at age 84. He joins his great-grandfather, Hubert Graham Osteen, grandfather, Noah Graham Osteen, father, Hubert Duvall Osteen, as well as many others in this prestigious Hall of Fame.



PHOTOS BY ALAYSHA MAPLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

The Sumter Item brought home 36 awards from the annual South Carolina Press Association News Contest — including second place in General Excellence and the President's Cup for Excellence in our division.

AWARDS

FROM PAGE A1

awards, a story remembering Tylee Craft, a Sumter High grad who played for North Carolina when he battled and ultimately lost his life to cancer, written by sports editor Tim Leible, was further recognized as a Best of the Best in sports writing over all similar first-place winners regardless of division, which is broken down by newspaper circulation size.

The Item also took home the President's Cup for Excellence, which recognizes the newspaper that performs the best overall in the contest in each division, for the second time in three years after not having won it since the cup's recordkeeping began.

"Our newsroom, hard-working reporters, photographers, videographers and designers, won more first-place awards for their work than in any year since I've been at *The Item* since 2017," said Kayla Green, executive editor. "We do this work regardless of recognition as a service to our community because we feel it's vital for people to be informed and connected on a grassroots level. It is, of course, always fun to take home validation for this often thankless work. Every year, I think I can't be more proud of this team, and every year, I find new reasons to be."

The other first-place awards included: Tim Leible, Cary Howard, Micah Green and Nich Pitts for Gridiron 2024, *The Item's* annual high school football preview.

Janel Przybyla and the newsroom staff for the September/October edition of Lakeside.

Bryn Eddy, along with John Ramsey from the *Post and Courier*, for Reporting

In-Depth for a series of stories on dysfunction in local government between Mayesville's mayor and town council.

Bryn Eddy for Government Reporting.

Alaysha Maple for News Feature Writing for a story on George Stinney Jr.'s family celebrating his life and legacy 80 years after his death.

Bryn Eddy for Lifestyle Feature Writing for a story on local coin collectors.

Alaysha Maple for Arts and Entertainment Writing for a story on Wings & Strings returning to Pizza Lane.

Alaysha Maple for Obituary for a story remembering Judy Lessard.

Rhonda Barrick for Sports Page Design.

Rhonda Barrick for Inside page Design.

Adam Flash for General News Photo for a photo of a rider being tended to after falling from a horse at the Black Cowboy Festival in Rembert.

Adam Flash for Portrait for a photo of student pilot Caden Champagne, seen through his sunglasses, at the Sumter Airport with the plane he was learning to fly.

Adam Flash for Photo Story for a series of photos on a prescribed burn at Poinsett State Park.

Adam Flash for Humorous Photo for a photo of a jockey being launched in the air after jumping a hurdle at the Carolina Cup steeplechase horse race in Candem.

Zac Hooks for Feature Video for an episode of Sumter Today featuring a group's walk in advocacy of foster children.

Zac Hooks for Sports Video for a segment remembering Tylee Craft.

Second-place awards included: The newsroom staff for General Excellence for overall newspaper quality,

based on local content, photography, design, reporting and writing.

Melanie Smith for Page One Design.

Rhonda Barrick for Photo Page Design.

Micah Green for Portrait for a photo of Myson's Tires co-owner Matthew Tickel, set through the center of a tire at the shop in Sumter.

Adam Flash for Photo Story for a series of photos on Hurricane Helene and a local effort to fly supplies to North Carolina.

Adam Flash for Humorous Photo for a photo of a swimmer losing his goggles but continuing to push through his race during a Wilson Hall swim meet.

Zac Hooks for Feature Video for an episode of Sumter Today on the Black Cowboy Festival.

Zac Hooks for Sports Video for an episode of The Grind on Keziah Sanders at Sumter High School.

Third-place awards included:

Alaysha Maple for Review Portfolio for her reviews of shows at Sumter Little Theatre and the movie "Bull Street."

Janel Przybyla and the newsroom staff for Life is Good, an annual progress magazine.

Alaysha Maple for Food Writing for a story on local food trucks Mi Promesa and The Juice Box.

Alaysha Maple for Obituary for a story remembering Sumter music icon Edward Wilkinson Jr.

Melanie Smith for Page One Design.

Adam Flash for Spot News Photo for a photo of a Sumter resident after Hurricane Helene.

Adam Flash for Feature Photo for a photo of a fuels technician during a prescribed burn at Poinsett State Park.

Micah Green for Portrait for a photo of Sumter High School running back duo Kam Fortune and John Peebles.

Micah Green for Photo Story for a series of photos from the Liverpool-Manchester United match at Williams Brice Stadium in Columbia.

To read or view all the winning work, find this story online at www.theitem.com.



TIM LEIBLE / THE SUMTER ITEM

The Item sports editor Tim Leible earned first place at annual SCPA News Contest for the 2024 Gridiron as well as his impactful feature on the late Tylee Craft.

VOTE

FROM PAGE A1

In the first reading vote two weeks ago, Johnson also abstained and McLeod was ruled not present. Both were virtual for that meeting and experienced technical difficulties, they said. Therefore, there were only seven total votes among the nine-member board. The 4-3 vote to reinstate the floor passed first reading because it still represented a board majority.

This time around, both were present at the district office for the meeting.

McLeod's vote represented a change in stance from last year when he supported maintaining the 50% grade floor, which had been in place in the district's grading manual for several years. Under the previous board, removing the grade floor passed in 5-4 and 5-3 votes in the summer of 2024.

With Johnson's abstention, McLeod was the key vote in preventing a reversal in last year's decision.

In recent weeks, McLeod said he had received countless emails and phone calls and had numerous encounters with community members on the grade floor issue, which had become a hot topic on social media.

"Every one of my constituents who spoke to me about it in any form was against having the grade floor this year," he told *The Sumter Item*. "As



BRUCE MILLS / THE SUMTER ITEM

Sumter school board Area 6 Trustee Matthew "Mac" McLeod listens during Monday's board meeting at the district office, 1345 Wilson Hall Road. Last year, McLeod was in favor of a 50% grade floor policy for students, but this year he changed his stance based on input from his constituents, he said.

you know, when we are elected to office, we are not our voice, but we are the people's voice."

In previous discussions, Canty, Disney and Leventis stressed that a 50% grade floor did not hold students accountable or promote excellence in education. A life-long educator, Disney also emphasized a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) is already in place in the district to help students and gives additional chances.

McLeod also mentioned the system of supports in district schools.

"Students and parents have to be willing to take advantage of those supports that

are in place," he said.

Those in favor of the grade floor said it allowed students a "second chance" to eventually pass a course.

However, Ragin, the board chairman, told *The Item* after first-reading approval that he and other trustees were looking to reinstate the 50% floor because the previous board, in place until the November 2024 election, was "railroaded by that new policy" last year and it was done "a little bit behind our backs."

"Right now, we are reinstating because the way that policy was enacted was a little bit behind our backs," he said on March 28.

He was referencing previous board member and Policy Committee Chairwoman Shery White, who, acting as an individual board member and not as a recommendation from the committee, introduced a policy motion against the grade floor for first reading to the full board on June 10, 2024. Ragin, a member of the Policy Committee at that time, said he took offense in that meeting to White's actions.

White said then that she had received counsel from the South Carolina School Boards Association, state Department of Education and board attorney Allen Smith before pursuing the measure.

Canty, who was the board chair at the time, agreed with White's actions and said those who opposed the motion had

the opportunity to create a proviso to replace the original motion when it was presented for second reading. Ragin and other trustees never did.

Efforts to reach Ragin and

Johnson, on her abstention, were not successful on Tuesday.

About 20 members of the public attended Monday's meeting.

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PUBLIC AGENDA

GREATER SUMTER CHAMBER OF COMMERCE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Wednesday, April 9, at noon, chamber office

SUMTER COUNTY VOTER REGISTRATION / ELECTION BOARD

Wednesday, April 9 at 5:30 p.m., registration / election office, 141 N. Main St. (this is a rescheduled meeting)

Thursday, April 10, at 5:30 p.m., registration / election office, 141 N. Main St.

CLARENDON COUNTY COUNCIL

Monday, April 14, at 6 p.m., Administration Building, Council Chambers, 411 Sunset Drive, Manning

CITY OF MANNING PLANNING COMMISSION

Monday, April 14, at 6:30 p.m., City Hall Council Chambers, 29 W. Boyce St., Manning

SUMTER CITY COUNCIL

Tuesday, April 15, at 5:30 p.m., Council Chambers on the fourth floor of Sumter Opera House, 21 N. Main St. (enter through the back parking lot entrance and take elevator to fourth floor)

CLARENDON COUNTY PLANNING & PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION

Tuesday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m., planning commission office, 411 Sunset Drive, Manning

BISHOPVILLE CITY COUNCIL

Tuesday, April 15, at 6:30 p.m., Colclough Building (as needed only)

SUMTER COUNTY DISABILITIES & SPECIAL NEEDS BOARD

CREATIVE ENVIRONMENTS INC.

INDEPENDENT LIVING INC.

ABILITIES UNLIMITED INC.

ADAPTIVE LIFESTYLES INC.

MAGNOLIA MANOR INC.

FIRST FLIGHT INC.

Tuesday, April 22, 8 a.m., 750 Electric Drive. Call (803) 778-1669, extension 2537.

MCLEOD HEALTH CLARENDON BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Tuesday, April 22, at 6 p.m., hospital board room, 10 E. Hospital St., Manning

AROUND TOWN

To correct any information or to make a submission to Around Town, email pressrelease@theitem.com with Around Town in subject line.

The City of Sumter is taking applications for its **Summer Youth Employment Programs**. For ages 14-15, the program includes work within city government roles. For ages 16 through high school, students can participate in the Co-Op Program with local businesses. To apply, students should contact their school guidance counselors for applications and income guideline information. Applicants must reside within city limits and meet HUD's income requirements. Application period is March 3 to May 2. Applications can also be downloaded from the city's website www.sumtersc.gov or picked up at the Liberty Center, Community Development/Housing, 12 W. Liberty St., Suite 4, during office hours, 8:30 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday to Friday. For additional information, contact Carolee Thomas at (803) 774-1652 or Clarence Gaines at (803) 774-1649.

The Sumter County Library - Wesmark Branch, 180 W. Wesmark Blvd., will hold its **Bits and Pieces Puzzle Club meeting** from 3-5 p.m. Wednesday, April 9.

Sumter County Recreation Department will be hosting an **Easter Egg Hunt & Family Afternoon** on Monday, April 14, beginning at 4 p.m. This is a free family event and will be held at Patriot Park, 380 General Drive, on Soccer Field 1, Sumter. In addition, Sumter County Sheriff's Office will be on site providing safety awareness, and SAFE Kids Sumter County will be on site conducting car seat safety checks. For more information, call (803) 436-2248 or email ichambers@sumtercountysc.gov.

The Evening Optimist Club is accepting **applications for the Sumter Iris Festival Parade** which will be held on Saturday, May 17, at 10 a.m. The theme for the 2025 Iris Festival Parade is "Purple Wonder." If your school, civic club, church or business would like an application, please visit irisfestival.org, or contact Gail Hyatt at (803) 983-3916 or via email, gailhyatt@sc.rr.com. Deadline for entry is Friday, April 25.

The City of Sumter invites everyone again this year to pitch in to clean up their community through **volunteer litter cleanup days**. The designated days this year are April 19, June 14, Aug. 16, Oct. 18 and Dec. 13. Spend a couple hours in the morning making a difference where you live. Anyone who would like to volunteer can sign up at the city's website, <https://tinyurl.com/mryzpu5n>. People can form cleanup teams to participate, but according to the site, you don't have to stick to just the scheduled days to help beautify your community. The city provides free supplies and trash bag pickup service.

Area businesses that want to get more involved in making the city a beautiful place to live and work can take the **Litter-Smart Business Pledge** at <https://tinyurl.com/mt8trytt>. About a dozen businesses have signed up so far to commit to keeping the land around their business litter-free. Businesses that sign up will receive a "Love where you live" sticker to display in their window and help spread the word about the pledge and also supplies to use for cleaning up.

SUMTER SPCA PETS OF THE WEEK

ABOVE: My name is Nala, and I am a 4-month-old, female, tan Chow mix. I am so very sweet, and I look just like a cute Teddy bear. My siblings are also here with me. I love to cuddle, kiss and run behind you! I'm all about going wherever you go on amazing adventures. I am good with other doggos, kids and most of all I am 100% a good girl.



RIGHT: My name is Loki, and I am a 2-month-old, male, black tabby American shorthair. I am housebroken and good with other kitties. In fact, I am here alongside my sibling Arty. My brother and I are super kind and sweet boys just looking for a place and family to call our forever home. I can be quite shy at times and laid back, whereas my brother loves to explore and be curious.



The Sumter SPCA is located at 1140 S. Guignard Drive, (803) 773-9292, and is open 11 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. every day except Wednesday and Sunday. Visit the website at www.sumterscspca.com.

WEATHER

Forecasts and graphics provided by AccuWeather, Inc. ©2025

AccuWeather® five-day forecast for Sumter

TODAY	TONIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Plenty of sunshine	Clear to partly cloudy	Increasing clouds	A few showers	Partly sunny and cool	Mostly sunny and pleasant
68°	45°	73° / 55°	71° / 48°	66° / 43°	71° / 48°
Chance of rain: 0%	Chance of rain: 0%	Chance of rain: 15%	Chance of rain: 65%	Chance of rain: 15%	Chance of rain: 0%
ENE 6-12 mph	SE 3-6 mph	S 6-12 mph	W 8-16 mph	NNW 7-14 mph	NW 6-12 mph

TODAY'S SOUTH CAROLINA WEATHER

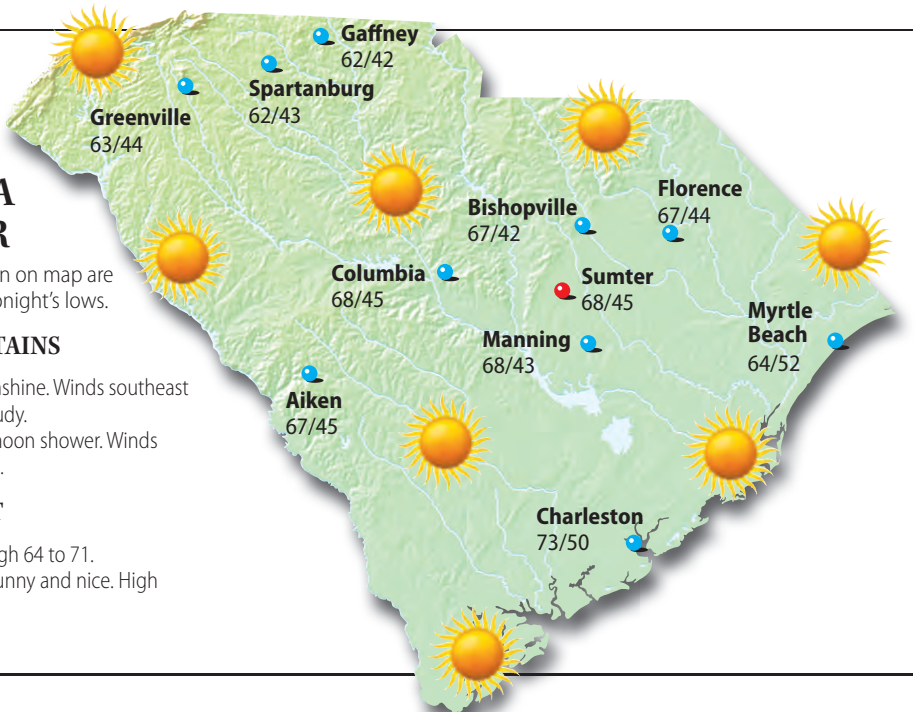
Temperatures shown on map are today's highs and tonight's lows.

IN THE MOUNTAINS

Today: Plenty of sunshine. Winds southeast 6-12 mph. Partly cloudy.
Thursday: An afternoon shower. Winds southwest 7-14 mph.

ON THE COAST

Today: Sunshine. High 64 to 71.
Thursday: Mostly sunny and nice. High 69 to 77.



LOCAL ALMANAC

SUMTER MONDAY

Temperature	
High	83°
Low	61°
Normal high	73°
Normal low	47°
Record high	91° in 1999
Record low	28° in 1950
Precipitation	
Monday	0.64"
Month to date	0.64"
Normal month to date	0.78"
Year to date	6.23"
Last year to date	9.96"
Normal year to date	11.70"

LAKE LEVELS

Lake	Full pool	7 a.m. yest.	24-hr chg
Murray	360	358.38	+0.28
Marion	76.8	75.89	+0.09
Moultrie	75.5	75.41	none
Wateree	100	97.50	+0.52

RIVER STAGES

River	Flood stage	7 a.m. yest.	24-hr chg
Black River	12	5.51	-0.17
Congaree River	19	5.67	+1.44
Lynches River	14	4.63	-0.22
Saluda River	14	6.12	+1.43
Up. Santee River	80	N.A.	N.A.
Wateree River	24	7.20	+0.19

SUN AND MOON

Sunrise	6:59 a.m.	Sunset	7:49 p.m.
Moonrise	5:01 p.m.	Moonsset	5:24 a.m.
Full	Last	New	First
Apr. 12	Apr. 20	Apr. 27	May 4

TIDES

AT MYRTLE BEACH

	High	Ht.	Low	Ht.
Today	7:36 a.m.	2.9	1:58 a.m.	0.3
	8:04 p.m.	3.0	2:27 p.m.	0.3
Thu.	8:17 a.m.	2.9	2:47 a.m.	0.2
	8:45 p.m.	3.1	3:07 p.m.	0.2

NATIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Thu.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Atlanta	66/49/s	73/51/pc
Chicago	43/35/r	48/35/r
Dallas	86/55/s	85/58/s
Detroit	46/37/pc	43/35/sn
Houston	82/59/s	86/60/s
Los Angeles	82/56/s	79/55/pc
New Orleans	76/55/s	80/63/s
New York	48/39/s	50/43/c
Orlando	81/62/s	80/61/sh
Philadelphia	51/37/s	52/45/c
Phoenix	98/67/s	102/70/s
San Francisco	70/52/s	67/54/s
Wash., DC	55/43/s	56/50/r

REGIONAL CITIES

City	Today	Thu.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Asheville	61/42/s	62/44/sh
Athens	66/45/s	70/51/pc
Augusta	69/43/s	75/54/pc
Beaufort	71/51/s	77/58/pc
Cape Hatteras	55/49/s	66/57/pc
Charleston	73/50/s	76/59/s
Charlotte	65/46/s	67/51/c
Clemson	63/45/s	67/50/pc
Columbia	68/45/s	73/54/pc
Darlington	67/43/s	71/55/pc
Elizabeth City	53/43/s	67/55/pc
Elizabethtown	66/44/s	72/55/c
Fayetteville	64/42/s	73/57/pc

City	Today	Thu.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Florence	67/44/s	73/57/pc
Gainesville	77/52/pc	80/53/pc
Gastonia	63/43/s	64/52/c
Goldensboro	65/41/s	73/56/pc
Goose Creek	71/47/s	78/58/pc
Greensboro	59/43/s	61/49/sh
Greenville	63/44/s	66/50/c
Hickory	60/43/s	61/47/sh
Hilton Head	68/54/s	72/61/s
Jacksonville, FL	73/53/pc	77/55/pc
La Grange	69/43/s	73/50/s
Macon	69/44/s	75/52/s
Marietta	66/45/s	72/50/pc

City	Today	Thu.
	Hi/Lo/W	Hi/Lo/W
Marion	61/37/s	60/47/r
Mt. Pleasant	69/53/s	74/62/s
Myrtle Beach	64/52/s	69/60/pc
Orangeburg	70/46/s	74/53/pc
Port Royal	70/53/s	76/58/s
Raleigh	63/44/s	68/54/c
Rock Hill	64/43/s	65/52/c
Rockingham	66/41/s	71/54/c
Savannah	73/51/s	79/58/pc
Spartanburg	62/43/s	65/49/c
Summerville	71/46/s	77/56/pc
Wilmington	65/47/s	71/58/pc
Winston-Salem	60/44/s	64/50/sh

Weather(W): s-sunny, pc-partly cloudy, c-cloudy, sh-showers, t-thunderstorms, r-rain, sf-snow flurries, sn-snow, l-ice

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SUMTER ANIMAL CONTROL PETS OF THE WEEK

ABOVE: Murphy is an absolute sweetheart! This gentle 44-pound boy is around 2-3 years old and has all the qualities you'd want in a perfect companion. With his kind heart and loving nature, he's ready to become someone's new best friend. Murphy walks beautifully on a leash and enjoys spending time outdoors, especially when he gets to play with his doggy pals. He absolutely adores the volunteers and is always happy to soak up love and attention. His calm and gentle personality has made him a volunteer favorite.



BELOW: Sadie is a stunning 55-pound possible retriever mix, around 2-4 years old, who was found wandering and came to the shelter as a stray. We were shocked that no one came to claim her because this girl is pure sunshine in dog form! With her beautiful coat, warm eyes and joyful personality, Sadie is ready to start fresh with a loving family. She has a medium energy level, making her the perfect balance of playful and relaxed. She enjoys taking walks, playing outside, and would absolutely thrive in a home with a secure fenced yard where she can stretch her legs and enjoy the fresh air. Sadie would love a home where she's part of the action and the affection.



If you're interested in meeting one of these pets at Sumter Animal Control, 1240 Winkles Road, call (803) 774-3232 or email sumterstrays@gmail.com. As with all of our adoptable pets, a spay or neuter agreement is required, and it is strictly enforced. Proof of spay/neuter after adoption will be required. Visit Sumter Animal Control online at www.savingsumterstrays.com or find them on Facebook.

The SPCA relies heavily on community support and donations. Currently, the biggest needs are for dry puppy and kitten food, wet cat food, cat litter and cleaning supplies. The following are also appreciated: Newspapers, stuffed animals, heavy duty trash bags (30 gallon or larger), dishwashing liquid, laundry detergent, bleach, paper towels, sheets and comforters, baby blankets, canned dog and cat food, dry dog food, treats, leashes and collars, disinfectant spray, all-purpose cleaner, air freshener, no scratch scrubbers, two-sided sponges for dishes, litter freshener and, of course, monetary donations are also gratefully accepted.

SUMTER ANIMAL CONTROL NEEDS YOUR HELP. We are looking for people to walk dogs, foster or help with transport. We desperately need 9 a.m. Monday – Friday walkers. Message us if interested. Must be at least 18 years old. Don't have extra time to be a volunteer? We gladly accept donations of the following: newspapers, puppy pads, canned and dry puppy food, paper towels, Clorox wipes and heavy duty slip leashes. You can also donate from our Amazon Wishlist under Saving Sumter's Strays at <https://www.amazon.com/gp/registry/wishlist/10Q422KA0M19>. All donations go toward helping Sumter County dogs. Our all-volunteer organization is making a big difference in the lives of so many homeless strays. Please help us continue to save animals.



PHOTOS BY NICH PITTS / ITEM CONTRIBUTOR

Wilson Hall's Molly Jones has already left a lasting mark on the Baron running programs. This fall, she set the school record in cross country and has a total of seven school records in track when combining individual events and relays.

WH's Jones sets record after record during sensational senior season

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

If you look up at the record boards for the Wilson Hall cross country and track programs, you'll see one name far more often than the rest.

Molly Jones has been on a mission to claim as many of the program's top marks as she can this year, though she's breaking several of her own records in the process. Just this year, she's set new school records in the 400m dash, 400m hurdles, 800m, 1,600m and 3,200m runs. She's also on the record-setting relay teams in both the 4x400 and 4x800, breaking the 4x400 mark more than once. She picked up cross country again this fall and set new school records three times through the season.

Simply put, Molly has set the standard at Wilson Hall.

"In my opinion, I've only

been here 10 years, but if you look at the record boards, she's going to go down as one of the most decorated runners in our track and field program," head track coach Rip Ripley said.

'She's going to end up being a part of essentially seven or eight school records, which nobody has ever done. Showing that ability makes it less surprising that she can go out and beat her record every time.'

RIP RIPLEY

Wilson Hall track coach

"She's going to end up being a part of essentially seven or eight school records, which nobody has ever done. Showing that ability makes it less surprising that she can go out and beat her record every time."

BORN TO COMPETE

As a member of the Jones family, Molly was raised to compete. Her grandfather, Wallie

Jones, is in the University of South Carolina Athletic Hall of Fame for his success with their baseball program and eventually led the Sumter P-15's to a mountain of success in American Legion ball. Molly's dad, Jay, has been a longtime base-



ball coach in Sumter at the youth level and at Wilson Hall. Both of her older brothers, Tyler and Dylan, were stand-outs on the diamond, track and gridiron. Molly was destined to set her own path.

"A lot of people would assume that I kind of have a big softball background since my family is so into baseball, but I did one year of PARD; did not like it," she said. "I've always been really competitive. I remember in PE when I was little, we'd all come out and race the mile, and that was my time to shine."

In a house with two older brothers relatively close in age, Molly was always competing.

"Now that they're graduated in college, we don't really have these arguments anymore, but I can remember like when I first started track it was always, 'Do you think you could beat them?'" Molly said. "And I think we kind of settled around like they could beat me in the sprints, and then I kind of got them in like an 800 or over."

Ripley has coached Molly in both volleyball and track throughout her career at Wilson Hall. He knew what to expect from the very beginning simply because of her last name, but Molly didn't plan on coasting just because people

SEE GRIND, PAGE B5



For a video interview with Jones hover your phone's camera over the code and click on the link that pops up.



Molly's passion for the hurdles helped her set the tone for a record-shattering senior year.



The Jones family supports Molly, center, during a meet.

PHOTO PROVIDED

Dream **Big**
Bank **Local**

The **GRIND** **BOC**
Presented by **Bank of Clarendon**

Thomas Sumter's Burnside signs to run at USC Beaufort

BY TIM LEIBLE
tim@theitem.com

Thomas Sumter senior Hannah Burnside has done a little bit of everything with the Lady Generals.

She's won state titles as a dominant hurdler and sprinter, while trying her hand at any event head coach Rob Coursey would let her try. Now, she's preparing for what's next, as she signed to continue her career at USC Beaufort on Friday.

"I've been doing this for so long, and now I finally got here," Burnside said of signing. "All of the people that helped me get here is what made it worth it."

Coursey was thrilled to see one of his long-time runners earn this chance to join a growing program.

"Kids like Hannah, you get like one every 10 years," Coursey said. "If you look at SC Mile, she has run the 100m, the 200m, the 400m hurdles, the 100m hurdles, the 3,200m, she has run almost every event out there. We had her throw the shot put at Wilson Hall. Just on a whim, she was like, 'I wanna try the shot put.' The other day, she said she qualified (for state) in 11 events total. She's never tried to pole vault because we won't let her, but we started going through the school records, and it's Taja Hudley's 100m hurdles school record, I think it was Aubrey Stoddard who had the 400m hurdle record, Whitney Thompson, these are all fantastic athletes at Thomas Sumter and multiple athletes at Thomas Sumter, she's broken all their records. We're getting our boards updated, and it's going to be Burnside, Burnside, Burnside."

"When we were talking to other coaches trying to get her recruited, I said you build a program around student-athletes that are like that, that are



Thomas Sumter's Hannah Burnside, seated second from the left, is joined by family, TSA Athletic Director Tanner Brunson, back left, and head track and cross country coach Rob Coursey, back right, after signing to continue her track career at USC Beaufort on Friday.

willing to do anything, anywhere, and she's done that for us ... She's a great young lady, and she's just fun to be around."

The TSA head coach helped get the ball rolling for Burnside at USC Beaufort. Once she made the connection and visited the campus, she found a great fit.

"The track coach was absolutely the sweetest person, and it really seemed like I would like it there," she said. "The campus was gorgeous. It's not too far from home, but it's far enough that I get to kind of be on my own."

Burnside expects to focus on the hurdles once she gets to USC Beaufort, but she's game to try whatever the coaching staff has in store for her.

"I think I might just stick with my hurdles, but I'm open to trying whatever they can teach me," she said. "I feel like I'm pretty coachable and I'm willing to do whatever, but I want to dig deeper into the times that I can get with the hurdles because that's what I love and enjoy the most."

Coursey wouldn't mind seeing Burnside try her hand at the pentathlon as a way to show off the breadth of her athleticism.

"I think the pentathlon would be perfect for her," he said. "She's had experience with multiples, with long, triple (jumps), I don't think we've thrown her in the javelin yet, the hurdling, the mile. There isn't anything she can't do. It's going to be really cool to see her run at USC Beaufort."

Burnside already has a few records under her belt at Thomas Sumter, but she's trying to see if she can best her own marks on the way out the door, especially if it helps the ultimate goal of a team title at state.

"I'm really hoping that the team gets a state title this year. It's been a long time coming," she said. "For the senior year, a state title for the team would be amazing, but also my personal goals are some state titles of my own and maybe some PRs (personal records). I just PRed in the 100m hurdles and beat my own school record, but that's a

goal. I'm open to setting more school records, as well. I know our 4x100 team, our 4x400 team, I really love those teams, and I think we could probably beat our own school records again."

Burnside hopes her journey to USC Beaufort can unlock her next step as a track athlete. After an already stellar high school career, she thinks she has plenty of untapped potential.

"Since we don't have a track at our school, working on an actual track before I run would be great," Burnside said with a laugh. "This year, we got someone who ran hurdles and knows how to coach it, but hopefully I'll learn from another person what I could do better or change."

"And just learning how to grow and be myself as an adult in college. I feel like most athletes who do sports and are also engaged in school have a tighter schedule, which makes them plan better. Hopefully it'll help me get through college and help me long term."



South Carolina forward Joyce Edwards (8) tries to pass against UConn forward Sarah Strong (21) during the national championship game on Sunday, April 6, in Tampa, Florida.

UConn returns to top of women's basketball, dominates S.C. 82-59 to capture its 12th title

TAMPA, Fla. (AP) — During the final sweet moments of UConn's 12th national title, Geno Auriemma and Paige Bueckers embraced after the star guard departed her final game with the Huskies.

It was the moment they wanted all along.

"They've all been gratifying, don't get me wrong," Auriemma said. "But this one here, because of the way it came about and what's been involved, it's been a long time since I've been that emotional when a player has walked off the court."

Bueckers, Azzi Fudd and Sarah Strong led the way as UConn returned to the top of women's college basketball by rolling to an 82-59 victory over defending champion South Carolina on Sunday.

Fudd, who was named the Most Outstanding Player of the Final Four, scored 24 points. Strong had 24 points and 15 rebounds, and Bueckers scored 17 points for UConn (37-3).

"Well, it's amazing to have three players, three people like that on the same team," said the 71-year-old Auriemma, who became the oldest coach in major college basketball to win a championship.

"And Sarah, you would think Sarah was graduating the way she plays, right? All three of them complement each other so well. They all have such unique skill sets."

Bueckers capped her stellar career with the Huskies' first championship since 2016, ending a nine-year drought for the team. That was the longest period for Auriemma and his program without a title since Rebecca Lobo and Jen Rizzotti led the Huskies to their first championship in 1995.

Since then the Huskies have had dominant championship runs, including in the early 2000s led by Sue Bird and Diana Taurasi, 2009-10 with Maya Moore and finally the four straight from 2013-16 with Breanna Stewart. All were in attendance in Florida on Sunday to see the Huskies' latest title.

"You just never know if you'll ever be back in this situation again," Auriemma said. "And there were so many times when I think we all questioned, 'Have we been here too long? Has it been time?' And we kept hanging in there and hanging in there, and that's because these players make me want to hang in there every day."

Clayton Jr.'s defensive stop gives Florida its 3rd national title

BY EDDIE PELLIS
Associated Press

SAN ANTONIO — Florida's Walter Clayton Jr. came up with the perfect going-away present for that spirit-crushing Houston defense that bullied, battered and bedeviled him all night.

It was a defensive gem of his own. Right before the buzzer. For the win and the national title.

The Gators and Clayton somehow overcame Houston's lockdown intensity, along with a 12-point deficit, Monday night to will out a 65-63 victory in an NCAA title-game thriller decided when the Florida senior's own D stopped the Cougars from even taking a game-winning shot at the buzzer.

Clayton finished with 11 points, all in the second half. What he'll be remembered for most was getting Houston's Emanuel Sharp to stop in the middle of his motion as he tried to go up for the game-winning 3 in the final seconds.

"Just go 100 percent," Clayton said when asked what he was trying to do at the finish. "We were just trying to get a stop, and we happened to get it. I'm happy we got it done."

With Sharp looking for room, Clayton ran at him. The Houston guard dropped the ball and, unable to pick it up lest he get called for traveling, watched it bounce. Alex Condon dived on the ball, then flipped it to Clayton, who ran to the opposite free-throw line with the buzzer sounding and tugged his jersey out of his shorts. Next, the court was awash in Gator champs and orange and blue confetti.

"We guarded them hard, and then I saw the ball loose, and I just hoped we beat them to the ball," Florida coach Todd Golden said.

This marked the fourth comeback in six March Madness wins for the Gators (36-4). They led this game for a total of 64 seconds, including the last 46 ticks of a contest that was



Florida celebrates after beating Houston in the national championship on Monday, April 7, in San Antonio.

in limbo until the final shot that never came.

Houston coach Kelvin Sampson called it "incomprehensible" that the Cougars couldn't get a shot off on either of their last two possessions.

About the last one, Sampson said: "Clayton made a great play. But that's why you've got to shot fake and get into the paint. Two's fine."

Will Richard had 18 points to keep the Gators in it, and they won their third overall title and first since Billy Donovan went back to back in 2006-07.

This time, it's Golden, in his third year, bringing the title back to Gainesville, where the Gator faithful can celebrate a win on one of college sports' grandest stages for the first time since Tim Tebow was playing quarterback for the football team in 2008.

This was the first hoops title for the Southeastern Conference since Kentucky in 2012, and the outcome the power conference was hoping for (expecting?) after placing a record 14 teams in the tournament.

The Cougars (35-5) and Sampson were denied their first championship and ended up in the same spot as the colorful Phi Slama Jama teams from the 1980s — oh so close in second place.

This was a defensive brawl — the Gators failed to

crack 70 for only the second time all season — and for most of the night, Clayton got the worst of it.

He was 0 for 4 from the field without a point through the first half. Met at the top of the circle, then double-teamed and trapped when necessary, he didn't score until hitting two free throws with 14:57 left.

The player who scored at least 30 points in the last two games, who averaged 24.6 through the first five games of the tournament, who almost singlehandedly outscored UConn and Texas Tech down the stretch of those March Madness comebacks, finished with one 3-pointer. Before that, he had a pair of three-point plays off drives to the hoop that kept the Gators in striking range. He finished 3 for 10.

He also became part of not one, but two stops that put these Gators in the history book and possibly cemented himself as the best basketball player to wear the orange and blue.

After Alijah Martin made two free throws to put Florida ahead 64-63 — its first lead since 8-6 — the Gators lured Sharp into a triple-team in the corner, where Clayton pressured him, and then Richard got him to dribble the ball off his leg and out of bounds.

Florida made one free throw on the next possession and that set up the finale.

AREA TRACK

Gamecocks run at Blazer Twilight Invitational

STAFF REPORT

The Sumter High track team took part in the Blazer Twilight Invitational on Friday.

Danabella Jackson led the charge for the Lady Gamecocks, finishing second in the high jump by clearing 1.62m. She also finished ninth in the 400m hurdles with a time of 1:11.45. Zoey Williams finished third in the shot put with a toss of 11.65m. Simone Wells added an eighth-place finish in the long jump by clearing 5.04m.

In track events, Sumter High finished eighth in the 4x200 with a time of 1:48.22. Angel Butler finished 36th in the 100m dash with a time of 12.97, while Madison Johnson finished 50th. Trinity Lowery finished 23rd in the 300m dash with a time of 44.48, while Carmine Bookhart finished 30th. Brenna Freeman finished 25th in the 1,500m run with a time



PHOTO PROVIDED

Sumter High's Danabella Jackson finished second in the high jump and ninth in the 400m hurdles at the Blazer Twilight Invitational on Friday.

of 5:44.94, while Kylee Johnson finished 43rd. The pair also

finished 25th and 29th, respectively, in the 3,000m run with times of 12:54.78 and 13:47.99.

The SHS boys were also led by the throws. Cooper Geddings finished fourth in the discus with a toss of 46.97m, while Ta'veon Brown finished fifth in the shot put with a throw of 15.09m.

In the track events, Elyjah Montague finished seventh in the 100m dash with a time of 10.85. Laitan Bledsoe finished 36th in the 300m dash with a time of 38.06. Christian Ingram finished 28th in the 1,500m run with a time of 4:35.87, while Tyler Metz finished 41st. That pair finished in 20th and 24th in the 3,000m run with times of 10:25.96 and 10:46.80. The Gamecocks' 4x200 team finished fifth with a time of 1:30.10, while their 800 sprint medley relay team, finished 12th with a time of 1:35.21. Their distance medley relay team finished 18th with a time of 12:53.14.

The Wilson Hall middle school girls track team celebrates after the SCISA middle school championship on Thursday.

PHOTO PROVIDED



Wilson Hall hosts SCISA middle school track championships

STAFF REPORT

Wilson Hall hosted the SCISA middle school track and field championships on Thursday, welcoming the top middle-schoolers in the state to showcase their skills.

BOYS

Trinity Collegiate's Dre'den Bethea took home the win in the 100m dash with a time of 11.97, followed by Ragin Prep's Justin Dozier with a time of 12.21. Thomas Sumter's Hadrian Hughey finished fourth, while teammate Jordan Oliver finished ninth. Wilson Hall's Chase Richburg finished 11th and Laurence Manning's Elijah Hilton placed 13th.

Bethea also won the 200m dash for Trinity with a time of 24.69, while Oliver finished fourth for TSA with a time of 26.91. Dozier finished seventh for Ragin Prep, while Wilson Hall's Liam Corcoran placed eighth.

Jack Gratz won the 400m dash for the Barons with a time of 53.69, while Hughey finished third for TSA with a time of 59.16. Gratz kept rolling in the 800m run, winning with a time of 2:08.97.

Thomas Sumter's Ashton Pierce finished second in the 1,600m run with a time of 5:11.47, while Wil Alexander finished sixth for Wilson Hall with a time of 5:31.41. Alexander also finished third in the 3,200m run with a time of 12:02.80, while Thomas Sumter's Wyatt Swinehart and Connor Van Osterom finished sixth and seventh, respectively.

Hughey finished runner-up in the 100m hurdles for TSA with a time of 18.36, while Oliver finished fourth. Thomas Sumter's Brody Olson took second in the 300m hurdles with a time of 54.62.

Thomas Sumter won the 4x100 relay with a time of 51.20, while Wilson Hall finished fifth and LMA placed seventh. The Barons finished fourth in the 4x400 with a time of 5:02.99. Wilson Hall added a third-place finish in the 4x800 with a time of 11:38.44.

Wilson Hall's Elijah Edwards and Liam Corcoran finished second and third in the high jump, both leaping 1.52m. Pierce finished fourth for TSA, clearing 1.47m.

Dozier won the long jump for Ragin Prep, leaping 5.44m. Wilson Hall's Sims Matthews finished ninth and Laurence Manning's Elijah Hilton took 14th. Matthews also finished fourth in the triple jump, clearing 10.26m, while teammate Chase Richburg finished sixth. Wilson Hall's Quentin Smith finished second in the pole vault, clearing 1.98m.

Wilson Hall's Edwards and Emory Clanton finished fourth and fifth in the discus with throws of 24.92m and 21.16m, respectively. Bridges Harris finished eighth for Laurence Manning. Harris also finished fourth in the javelin with a throw of 29.72m, while Swampcat teammate Conley Moore finished sixth and

TSA's Samuel Peckham placed seventh. Wilson Hall's Gratz finished fifth in the shot put with a throw of 8.52m, while Moore took ninth for LMA and Ragin Preps Josiah Mickens finished 10th.

GIRLS

Laurence Manning's Kendall Tanner finished fifth in the 100m dash with a time of 13.98, while Wilson Hall's Clara Hulshizer finished ninth and Thomas Sumter's Stella Linder finished 10th. Thomas Sumter's Lollie Hawkins finished 14th in the 200m dash with a time of 32.37. Kaitlyn Walker finished third in the 400m dash for Wilson Hall with a time of 1:10.83, while Thomas Sumter's A'leigha Nelson finished 10th.

Wilson Hall's Emmie Williamson and Jane Foley finished second and third in the 800m run with times of 2:32.76 and 2:35.71. Teammates Roley Coker and Cecilia Ayres finished seventh and 10th, while Nelson finished 13th for TSA. Williamson and Foley also finished second and third in the 1,600m run with times of 5:43.77 and 5:44.13, while Coker finished eighth.

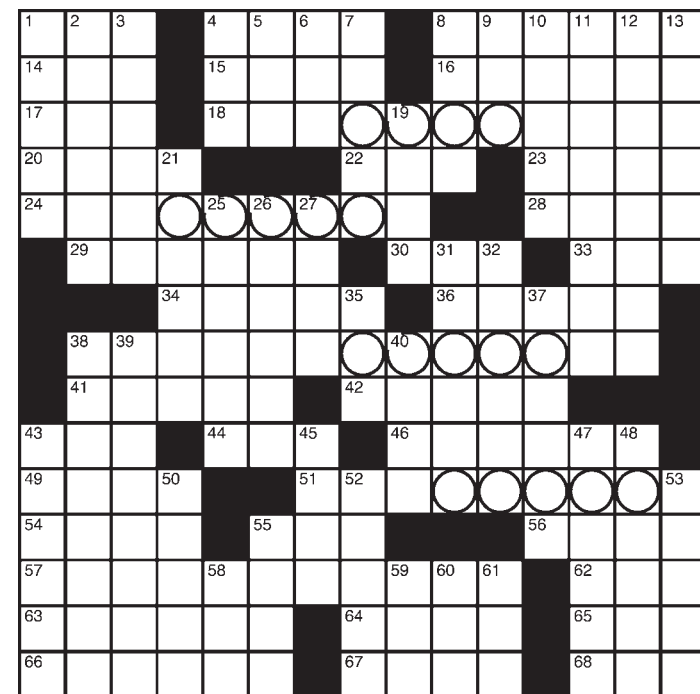
Wilson Hall took the top two spots in the 100m hurdles, as Karson Jones crossed with a time of 17.73, and Elisa Getz finished with a time of 18.01. Jones also won the 300m hurdles with a time of 51.60, while Elisa Getz finished third with a time of 55.20. Sutton Shook also finished seventh for the Lady Barons.

Wilson Hall finished third in the 4x100 with a time of 57.40, while LMA finished sixth and Thomas Sumter took eighth. The Lady Barons won the 4x400 with a time of 4:33.23, while LMA finished sixth and TSA finished seventh. Wilson Hall rounded out the relays by winning the 4x800 with a time of 12:01.09, while TSA finished third.

The Lady Barons took the top two spots in the high jump. McKinley Bath cleared 1.57m to finish first, while Grace Stewart was .05m behind in second. Getz won the long jump for Wilson Hall, clearing 4.37m, while LMA's Kendall Tanner finished second with a jump of 4.32m. Leland Jones also finished fourth for Wilson Hall. Stewart also won the triple jump for Wilson Hall, clearing 8.92m, while teammate Kennedy Bleifield finished third with a leap of 8.46m. LMA's Khloe Hodge and Paisley Timmons finished fifth and sixth. Wilson Hall had the only five pole vaulters. They were led by Clara Hulshizer, who cleared 2.44m.

Wilson Hall's Ashley Carter won the discus with a throw of 22.38m, while teammate Mikaela Bolton finished fourth. TSA's Leia Branham finished fifth. Bath won the javelin for Wilson Hall with a toss of 34.06m, while Olivia Welch finished third for Laurence Manning with a throw of 19.71m. Thomas Sumter's Alexis Connell finished third in the shot put with a throw of 7.04m, while Bolton took fifth for Wilson Hall.

CROSSWORD



Across

- 1 Like a texter who sends a crying emoji
- 4 Frittata ingredients
- 8 Words to live by
- 14 Green prefix
- 15 Simple fastener
- 16 Wayward
- 17 Took off
- 18 Nerf squirt gun in the National Toy Hall of Fame
- 20 Pop star
- 22 Grassy meadow
- 23 Himalayan Bigfoot
- 24 Emergency evacuation rehearsal
- 28 Compare prices
- 29 Texas team in the American League since 2013
- 30 Approves
- 33 Dawn goddess
- 34 Kia crossover SUVs
- 36 Instant noodles option
- 38 Inequality in access to technology
- 41 Wear away
- 42 Place of refuge
- 43 Bioengineered food initials
- 44 Sp. woman
- 46 On deck
- 49 Christian period after Carnival
- 51 Piano larger than a spinet
- 54 Length x width
- 55 Pre-K sequence
- 56 Winter blanket
- 57 Frantic, last-minute rush, and what can be found in each set of circled letters in this puzzle?
- 62 Responded to a rumbling tummy
- 63 For the time being, in some titles
- 64 Looks at
- 65 Barely passing grade
- 66 With reason
- 67 Leak out slowly

Down

- 1 Stroke that some fonts are "sans"
- 2 National park near Bar Harbor
- 3 GoFundMe contributors
- 4 The last of us?
- 5 Bearded beast
- 6 Banana Republic parent company
- 7 Hex
- 8 Home of two Cactus League stadiums
- 9 ___y plata: phrase on Montana's state flag
- 10 Cafeteria carriers
- 11 Pay attention
- 12 Low tie score
- 13 Formats for funnies
- 19 Move, in brokerese
- 21 "C'mon! It's time!"
- 25 iPhone alternatives
- 26 Networking device
- 27 Land in the agua
- 31 ___ Krema donuts
- 32 Building a nest egg
- 35 ___-mo replay
- 37 Tightwads
- 38 Natural brown sugar
- 39 Like some patches
- 40 Apply haphazardly
- 43 Stays in a luxury yurt, say
- 45 "Mamma Mia!" band
- 47 Eden in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"
- 48 Govt. securities
- 50 Flavor
- 52 Pinnacles
- 53 Nerdy type
- 55 Navy's college football rival
- 58 Animation buff's collectible
- 59 "See ya!"
- 60 Gymnast Suni with six Olympic medals
- 61 Mind reader's gift

JUMBLE

Unscramble these Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

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4 9

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME

By David L. Hoyt and Jeff Knurek



Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

SUDOKU

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

HOW TO PLAY: Each row, column and set of 3-by-3 boxes must contain the numbers 1 through 9 without repetition.

SOLUTIONS

B	S	U	P	E	S	Y	T	E	N	A	S
E	D	E	S	E	V	E	M	T	E	O	R
E	A	T	E	M	B	A	V	C	O	S	Q
W	O	N	S	C	A	B	A	V	A	V	A
D	A	N	A	B	A	B	C	A	N	T	E
L	X	T	E	N	P	S	R	A	S	O	M
S	I	S	O	E	D	O	I	E	R	E	
E	L	I	A	I	D	L	I	A	I	D	E
N	E	N	R	A	M	E	N				
S	O	S	K	O	S	O	S	T	R	S	A
P	O	H	S	L	L	O	R	E	O	F	I
I	E	T	L	V	L	V	L	O	O	I	
K	E	R	A	V	A	S	U	P	E	S	
N	T	E	R	R	A	V	S	N	A	V	
S	O	S	T	O	M	S	G	E	G	S	A

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

Jumbles: ELITE SIGHT CANVAS
 Answer: The general wanted his son to help around the house, but it was a LOSING BATTLE

AREA ROUNDUP

SHS softball cruises past East Clarendon

STAFF REPORT

The Sumter High softball team hosted East Clarendon on Friday, running away with a 10-0 win in five innings.

Lillie Ivey was untouchable in the circle, allowing just one single to Braelyn Locklear, while striking out eight Lady Wolverines in five shutout innings.

The SHS offense pounded out 16 hits against Layke Jeffords and Locklear. Hannah DuRant was 3-4 with three RBIs and two runs scored to lead the way, while Sydney Rhodes tripled and finished with two hits and two RBIs. Ariana Evans doubled, singled and scored a run. McKayla Mouradjian added two hits and scored a run, while Bailey Ardis had two knocks and drove in two runs.

CLARENDON HALL WINS SERIES WITH CALHOUN

After splitting the first two games of their series, Clarendon Hall traveled to Calhoun Academy on Friday looking to grab a victory to claim the series win. After trading three-run innings early, the Lady Saints grabbed a 5-4 lead with two runs in the fourth and never looked back on their way to a 9-4 victory.

Brynli Brewer settled in after a tough start in the circle, allowing four runs on nine hits across five innings. She struck out seven. Calli Yount shut the door with two shutout innings, striking out seven batters while allowing two hits.

Brewer doubled and scored twice out of the leadoff spot, finishing 2-5. Skylar Dymond and A.C. Martens each added a pair of hits as the Lady Saints collected a total of 10

knocks on the night. Maggie Harrington reached twice on a hit and a walk, while Yount added a double and scored a run.

LMA ROLLS PAST JPII

The Laurence Manning softball team hosted John Paul II on Friday, cruising to a 10-0 win in six innings.

Kayleigh Parmenter-Avins tossed a complete game, allowing just three hits and a walk, while striking out nine.

Offensively, the top of the lineup went to work. Marlee Black notched two hits, while Lyza Prickelmyer tripled three times, driving in two runs while scoring three times.

Ashley Rae Hodge added two hits, two RBIs and two runs scored, while Lilly Wellborn tripled and drove in two runs. Laini Kosinski added two hits, including a double and an RBI.

BASEBALL

MANNING MASHES MULLINS

The Manning baseball team traveled to Mullins on Friday and only needed four innings to leave with a 20-3 win.

CJ Joye mashed two home runs for the Monarchs, including a grand slam, while collecting a total of three hits. He drove in eight runs to power the offense. CJ Robinson added a triple, three RBIs and three runs scored, while Johnathon White went 2-2 with a double, driving in two runs. Manning finished with 20 runs on 12 hits, six walks and two hit batters.

Joshua White and Lucas Peters split time on the mound in the win. Peters didn't allow a hit in 2 2/3 innings, walking two while striking out four. Joshua White allowed one earned run on no hits and four



Sumter High's Lillie Ivey, left, delivers against East Clarendon on Friday.

PHOTOS BY NICH PITTS / ITEM CONTRIBUTOR

Carolina Academy charged back with five runs in the fifth, but the Cavs gave themselves some cushion with three runs in the sixth on their way to the win.

Lee Academy finished with 11 hits and walked seven times in the win. Brayden Davis led the charge with three hits, two RBIs and two runs scored. Andrew Bowers and Tucker Rodgers each drove two runners home, while Landon Olson and Myles Frye each added two hits.

Brayden Davis earned the win, pitching four innings while allowing three earned runs on three hits and five walks. He struck out four. Gilbert allowed two earned runs on two hits, a walk and a hit batter while getting one out. Olson pitched 2 2/3 innings, allowing one run on two hits with four strikeouts.

GAMECOCKS FALL TO BRUINS

The Sumter High baseball team hosted South Florence on Friday, falling 8-1.

After three scoreless innings, the Bruins opened the floodgates with five in the fourth, stringing together five consecutive one-out hits before a fielder's choice that failed to get an out and a sacrifice fly. The Gamecocks got a run back in the bottom half of the frame on an RBI single from Joseph Chapman, but they weren't able to get anything else going.

The Gamecocks managed just three hits and four walks in the loss. Larry Johnson reached base twice on a hit and a walk, scoring the lone run. Cory Bailey took the loss on the bump, allowing five runs in four innings of work. He surrendered six hits and two walks while striking out four. Morgan Love allowed



Sumter High's Ariana Evans, left, runs the bases against East Clarendon.

Tyler Jordan and Cooper Scott split time on the mound in the loss, allowing a combined six earned runs on nine hits and three walks.

Benson Elmore homered and drove in two runs to lead the Baron offense, while Carson Wilsey added a hit and an RBI.

SOCCER

WILSON HALL BLANKS EC

The Wilson Hall soccer team faced off with East Clarendon on Friday, taking home a 6-0 win.

Shawn Michael Matthews had a goal and dished out two assists for the Barons, while Abel Ayers added a goal and an assist. Wilson Wells, Gavin Getz, Logan Pauly and Michael Warrick each added goals, while Jane McAdams had an assist.

SHS FALLS TO SPRING VALLEY

The Sumter High soccer teams faced Spring Valley on Friday, dropping both contests.

back-and-forth fight exchanging offensive goals throughout the first half with both teams playing fast-paced transitional offense. At the half, the Swampcats trailed 6-5. Early in the third quarter, a Philip Simmons score had them down 7-5, the Swampcats transitioned to a slower-paced, control-oriented offense and chipped away at the lead, tying the game midway through the fourth quarter at 7-7. A late fastbreak goal on a turnover changed the game to 8-7. The Swampcats had a chance in the final 90 seconds but came up short. Jackson Timmons continued his dominance at the face-off position, winning 13 of 15 attempts. The offense was led by Coleman Elmore with three goals, Hunter Stanfield added two, and Aaron Nivens and Jordan Ives each had a goal. Adam Tamburello and Camdyn Strickler each had an assist. The defense was led by Brock Tamburello, Cade Hodge and Gavin Brown, with Phoenix Tisdale having five saves in goal.



East Clarendon's Zoey Culick swings on Friday.

Sears gets first win as A's top Rockies 7-4

BY PAT GRAHAM
Associated Press

DENVER — Jacob Wilson atoned for hitting into a triple play with a two-run double that sent the Athletics on their way to a 7-4 win over the struggling Colorado Rockies on Saturday night.

Wilson's double in the sixth dropped on the left-field line and gave the Athletics the lead after trailing 3-0. In the second inning, Wilson sent a chopper to Ryan McMahon that the Rockies third baseman turned into a 5-4-3 triple play. It was the first time the Athlet-

ics have hit into a triple play since June 20, 2021, at the New York Yankees. The last time Colorado turned a triple play was Sept. 1, 2015, against Arizona.

Brent Rooker and Shea Langeliers both homered to straightaway center as part of a three-run seventh inning that made it 7-3. The team has gone deep in all nine games, which sets the Athletics' mark for the longest streak to open a season.

Former Wilson Hall star JP Sears (1-1) settled in after a shaky start. He allowed three runs over 6 1/3 innings. Mason Miller earned

his third save as he hit 101.7 mph while closing out the ninth.

Sean Bouchard and McMahon homered for the Rockies, who lost their sixth straight. Their 1-7 start is tied with the 2005 club for the worst through the opening eight games.

Germán Márquez (0-1) couldn't find his rhythm as he tied a career high with six walks.

KEY MOMENT

Tyler Soderstrom made an incredible stretch at first base to snare Luis Urias' throw for a big out in the seventh inning.



ASSOCIATED PRESS

Former Wilson Hall standout and current Oakland Athletics starting pitcher JP Sears works against the Colorado Rockies on Saturday, April 5, in Denver.

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GRIND

FROM PAGE B5

knew her family.

"A little part of that has to be chalked up to the DNA; the Jones family is one known for being pretty competitive in all that they do, and she definitely caught that bug. She wanted to be the best she can be," Rip said. "From an early age, it was obvious she was going to be one that was capable. With a lot of girls that age, it's always the question of are they going to put the work in? I think Molly has more than proven that she was more than willing to take on that workload. She really sets a good example for those around her."

While her family is most well-known for baseball, Molly had some runners to look up to in the family, too.

"My grandpa and my uncle Tom and uncle Rick were all big marathon runners, so I definitely have running in my genes, and I know there was kind of an expectation there because they were so good at it," she said. "I wanted to be like them, too."

Whenever Molly's in the thick of offseason training, her grandpa is always trying to find ways to help her find the drive to keep going.

"He really helps motivate me," Molly said. "Throughout the winter months, which is the hardest time to train because you're out here alone and it's 30 degrees, you want to be wrapped up in a blanket at home. I felt that many days but still got myself to come out here. He'd send me pretty motivational things and links to videos and everything to help keep me going."

The Jones family is also as supportive as they come. There aren't many sporting events at Wilson Hall that don't have at least one member of the family in attendance.

"I definitely feel it all now since I'm the baby of the Wally Jones family, since both of my cousins are off at Clemson and then both my brothers are off at Carolina. Even my aunt and uncle will be pretty supportive and keeping up with everything," Molly said. "Obviously, my parents wouldn't miss anything, neither would my grandparents. Since like most of all my family is from Sumter, a lot of my second cousins do track, too, so it's like my extended family's out here, too, which is kind of funny. I like having everyone out here."

That support means a lot of time in the car, too. This winter, Molly tried her hand at indoor track. There weren't many meets in South Carolina, so the Jones family loaded up the car and drove up to Winston-Salem to compete.

"We went up there two different weekends, and I did the 1,600 and was just an unattached athlete. We made the three-hour trip or however long it was, and I'm sure they weren't too thrilled about driving all that, but they did it with a smile on their face," Molly said. "They saw how exciting it was for me to reach those PRs, and I think that made it all worth it."

EARLY SUCCESS

Molly set a strong tone early, taking part in two different record-setting relays as an eighth-grader. She ran the first leg in the 4x400 with a team that included Gracyn Coker, Kaitlyn Smith and Emma Bradley. She then anchored the 4x800 team that set the school record during the state meet. Now a senior, Molly has a new perspective on how special it was to set new marks with that group of upperclassmen.

"It really wasn't that nerve-racking for the 4x4 because I really didn't have that perspective," Molly said. "Gracyn and Kaitlyn were both seniors and I was in eighth grade, so I have so much time, but for them, now that I'm the senior and I'm in their shoes, like it's crunch time. I know how much pressure they probably felt; it's probably aggravating that I didn't seem that nervous. But I was really nervous for the 4x8 record because we had never run any time close to it. Coach Rip told us like a week before state like, 'Hey y'all really could like break this record. We have a good group of 800 runners, which is hard to come by.'"

Rip put her on those relay



Molly runs at practice on Tuesday, April 1.

NICH PITTS / ITEM CONTRIBUTOR



PHOTO PROVIDED

From left, Molly, Gracyn Coker, Kaitlyn Smith and Emma Bradley celebrate after setting the school record in the 4x400 during her eighth-grade season.

teams as an eighth-grader for one simple reason.

"In track, we have the benefit that the clock doesn't lie. She proved throughout that year that she was capable of those times, so a lot of times we give the benefit to the kid that can run it," he said. "With us all running together, she was able to get a taste of those varsity meets at an earlier age. It's not like she was a middle-schooler that was dominating middle school meets and didn't have the understanding of what it takes to compete at a high level. She was definitely ready for it."

That was just the start for Molly. She broke the 4x400 again during both her sophomore and junior seasons. The avalanche of records really started to flow during her junior season last spring after setting her first individual record, the 800m run. She followed that with the 400 hurdles record, capping off the season with the current 4x400 record at state.

"On March 23, I broke my first individual record. I broke the 800 record by like .1 over at Coaches Classic, and I think that really just served as a catalyst. It was really motivating to kind of feel that recognition. I think that's what took me to the next level," Molly said of her junior season. "I think I had a stronger approach at things in the 400 hurdles. I broke that record for the first time in late March, and then it was like every time I ran it, I just kept PRing. It was easy in hurdles to get that mindset because you can fix things like your form and stuff, and that'll help chop down some time, whereas you don't see that in like the 400 open."

SENIOR SUCCESS

After two years of just focusing on volleyball in the fall, Molly decided to give cross country another shot this season. What started as a way to stay in shape for track turned into another banner season for the senior.

"I remember after our track banquet, Coach Catherine Schwartz came up to me and was like, 'Hey, we need some more girls on the cross country team.' I was like, you know what, I'll just do cross country. It's my senior year, it'll be good to get me in shape for track, and I ended up really loving it and was running times I never thought I'd do," Molly said. "If you would've told me in May of last year, 'Yeah, you broke 19 in the 5K, I would've thought you were crazy. I kind of like I re-

member telling my dad I'm just doing it to get in shape, I mean I'd be fine with like 21 minutes or 20 minutes or something. After seeing that success with 18:47, I had to do the mile now, and I've even done the two mile a few times. I felt like I really had to get into distance and loved it."

Molly was committed to being successful from the jump. She immediately worked with the entire coaching staff, including Kristine and Dusty Smith, Shanna Thomas, head coach Reid Schwartz and his wife, Catherine, on finding the right routine. Molly was still playing volleyball, so she had to find a balance between keeping pace with the mileage of the rest of the team while still having the energy to compete on the court.

"We would adjust things slightly for her, so if she had multiple volleyball games or a tournament, she probably wasn't running the longer 6-7 mile run the others would on the weekend," Shanna said. "We'd tell her to rest and recover and try to get three or four miles instead. She was following the plan with the rest of the team, but we made some adjustments so we wouldn't overdo it for her."

The senior still got plenty of miles in while balancing her time between the two sports.

"I've always used Strava and stuff and have uploaded my runs there, but I never had a specific, 'OK, I'm gonna do this training plan, log this many miles a week.' My senior year (of) cross country is where that really started to kick in," Molly said. "I was doing about 25 miles a week, and that was on top of playing volleyball. In the offseason, I kind of built myself up, and now currently for track, I'm at about 30 miles per week, and everything's pretty like planned out to a T, which has helped."

Rip never took her work ethic for granted.

"It's a tough double," Rip said of playing two sports in the same season. "We've seen some kids in the past do that, and we try to work together to allow that. That's one of the benefits of a school of our size is kids being able to play multiple sports, but it takes a lot of planning, a lot of coordination and a lot of self-motivation from the kid when they're not at practice every day for cross country. You get home from a tough volleyball game and (ask), 'do I really want to go on a four-mile run right now?' A lot of kids say no, and Molly says yes. A lot of times, she had

it done before the game. That's just her personality and her drive."

It didn't take Molly very long to chase down the school record. She set a new personal record in her first meet and kept shaving off time as the season wore on.

"My freshman year, my PR was a 20:43. Then my senior year, the first meet, which is always kind of like a rust-buster, I ran I think like a 20:20, and so that's a PR; I really didn't expect that," Molly said. "Then, since volleyball and weekday meets didn't really like line up on the schedule, it was about a month later when I ran at Lake Murray, and I ran a 19:14, which was over a minute PR; which was like, 'OK, where did that come from?' I think with the training plan I was on and since like our coaches know so much, I think it was just like catered perfectly."

Shanna knew it was only a matter of time.

"I was a little surprised it happened so early, but I knew it was going to happen," Shanna said. "She's the kind of athlete where I knew if she bought in and trusted the process, went the paces we told her to, that it would eventually be broken. Then I knew it was going to keep dropping. When an athlete of that caliber puts in the work and the effort, she's going to continue to improve."

Molly kept trimming off time as the fall wore on. By the time state rolled around, she was able to break 19 minutes, finishing in 18:47.56, shaving nearly 30 seconds off her initial record.

"She is a competitor and always wants to improve," Dustin said. "If she sets a school record, her next day she wants to break it again."

Once the cross country season came to a close, Molly and Shanna worked together to craft a new workout routine. Molly runs a wide range of events, and she wanted to train in a way that helps her prepare for both sprints and distance.

"She wanted to keep her speed but also have that endurance for that distance piece. Once she got back into it after recovering post-cross country, we did a couple of months really focused on that base. I was having her do a lot of easier runs in the aerobic zone, where the heart rate is pretty much at a conversational pace, which was hard for her because she likes to go fast. I told her to trust me, you have to build up your base first," Shanna, who also coaches hurdles during track season, explained. "Then

I started throwing in some threshold workouts to help increase her threshold. As we progressed and she was getting closer to some indoor races, I started throwing in some more track-specific speed workouts. I had this longer-term outlook so she could get that base, build that up and work on that endurance at a higher pace and then work on that speed."

RECORDS KEEP FALLING

This spring, Molly has destroyed records at an earth-shattering pace. For most of the season, she's breaking a record a week. She topped her own records in the 400m hurdles and 800m run while setting new records overall in the 1,600m and 3,200m run, plus the open 400m dash.

"This year has been an insane year," she said.

As of this week, Molly's record in the 400m dash sits at 59.98. Her 800m mark is 2:18.31, while her 1,600m and 3,200m records are at 5:08.28 and 11:42.33. Molly's top time in the 400m hurdles this spring is 1:05.08. Those numbers might keep shrinking because Molly doesn't plan on slowing down.

"I mean, everyone wants to get a PR," Molly said as humbly as possible. "I don't know how to say it without sounding (cocky), but every time I PR, it's a school record. I really don't mean it like that. I just think of it as PRing, and who doesn't want to PR?"

Dustin is no stranger to watching these records fall at Wilson Hall. His daughter ran those relays with Molly before graduating and his son, Conner, holds all three distance records on the boys side for track and was the record-holder in cross country until Caulder Williamson topped his mark this fall. While the individual marks are impressive, the detail that catches Dustin's attention is the volume.

"I think you'd be hard-pressed to find an athlete that has that wide a breadth. When you bridge that wide gap from mid-distance to distance and break all the records, and she was competitive in the long jump, she did pole vault for a while," Dustin said. "She could probably do a lot of track and field events and be successful. We were at a small meet a few weeks ago, and she was doing the 100. I asked what she was doing, and she just said, 'I wanted to see how I'd do.'"

LEARNING FROM INJURY

Molly has always been a self-motivated athlete, but she gained a new perspective during her sophomore year when an injury kept her sidelined for most of the fall. While playing volleyball, she landed on a teammate's foot. She didn't break anything, but she was in constant pain. She tried to tough it out for a while but eventually realized she needed to take some time to rest.

"I think I became a lot stronger mentally because at first, I really tried to battle through the injury, which really didn't help at all. It actually just made it worse and put me in a cast and took me out like my entire fall season," she said. "I think being sidelined really made me appreciate my ability to do stuff, which sounds so stupid, but when it's taken away from you, you really can see how much it impacts you."

She also learned a lot from watching her brother go through a more extreme injury a year later. Last fall, Dylan was putting up monster numbers for the Baron football team as they continued their quest for a state title, but he tore his ACL just before the end of the regular season. That meant he missed out on his final season of baseball, where he played for his father.

"Seeing how hard he worked in football and how excited he was for his last season of baseball, it being stripped away was really hard to watch," Molly said. "It would be a disservice not to go all out this season and hit goals I never would've imagined."

Those experiences all fed into the mental edge that Molly tries to keep at all times.

"I really like the cliché of, 'If it doesn't challenge you, it doesn't change you,' when thinking about the mental side of running," Molly said. "Some workouts are supposed to be hard, and that's how I know it's beneficial."

It's time to talk NBA awards as last week of regular season hits

BY TIM REYNOLDS

Associated Press

Denver's Nikola Jokic might end the season averaging a 30-point triple-double. His numbers, going into the final week: 30 points, 12.8 rebounds and 10.2 assists per game. That is a combination of stats never previously seen in NBA history.

And he probably isn't going to be MVP.

It is time for the annual debate and addressing the annual problem: What makes an MVP? There is no official definition. If having the best stats makes one the best player, then it should be Jokic. If it's the best player on the best team, then it should be — and probably will be — Oklahoma City's Shai Gilgeous-Alexander.

It'll be one of those two, meaning it's certain that the MVP will be an international player for a seventh consecutive season. Gilgeous-Alexander could be the second Canadian to win after two-time recipient Steve Nash; Jokic, of Serbia, has won three of the last four MVPs, with Milwaukee's Giannis Antetokounmpo (Greece) winning twice and Philadelphia's Joel Embiid (a native of Cameroon) winning once in this seven-year span.

The numbers for Gilgeous-Alexander: 32.6 points, 5 rebounds, 6.4 assists per game on 52% shooting. The only player to do all that in a season: Michael Jordan, who did it twice, first in 1988-89 then again in 1989-90.

"We always say the leader is the person doing the right thing, and that makes leadership accessible to everybody and entitled to no one," Thun-

der coach Mark Daigneault said. "And he walks the walk. He's a great worker. He's built self-confidence that is now contagious ... he's fully himself. He walks the walk day after day. It's a beautiful thing."

Jokic, assuming his assist numbers don't plummet this week, will be the third player to finish a season averaging a triple-double. Russell Westbrook did it four times and Oscar Robertson did it once. And Jokic's numbers are so good that even Minnesota's Nickeil Alexander-Walker — who happens to be Gilgeous-Alexander's cousin — even had to acknowledge that the race is a legitimate one.

"He's making a good run for MVP," Alexander-Walker told reporters after Minnesota survived Jokic's 61-point, 10-rebound, 10-assist night for a 140-139 win over the Nuggets last week. "You guys know who I got, but he's making it tough, for sure. Star player, always making the right play. Gotta respect it. Gotta tip my hat to him."

There will be an oft-used argument for either player in the final days of the season and before the MVP ballots get sent back to the league office for counting: "How can someone average those numbers and not win MVP?"

It's not a good argument. Here's why. In Westbrook's four triple-double seasons, he won MVP once. Robertson didn't win MVP in his triple-double season. And when Jordan had his seasons of averaging 32, 5 and 6 while shooting at least 50%, he didn't win MVP in either of them. (It should be noted that in 1963-64, Robertson won MVP averaging 31.4

points, 11 assists and 9.9 rebounds per game, meaning he was seven total rebounds shy of averaging a triple-double.)

Imagine that. Some of the greatest, and most unique, statistical seasons in NBA history didn't net an MVP award. And it's going to happen again this year, barring the unlikely event of Jokic and Gilgeous-Alexander finishing tied in the balloting.

Odds are, that won't happen. BetMGM Sportsbook says Gilgeous-Alexander is a huge favorite to win — his odds are listed at -3000, with Jokic at +1000.

ROOKIE OF THE YEAR

It looks like it'll be back-to-back rookie of the year wins for the San Antonio Spurs.

Victor Wembanyama won it last year and this year, it's Stephon Castle (-1600) the favorite over Atlanta's Zacharie Risacher (+1000) and Washington's Alex Sarr (+1300).

Castle leads rookies in points per game and is finishing the season with a flourish, which might resonate even further with voters — his closing argument of sorts.

DEFENSIVE PLAYER OF THE YEAR

Had he not been forced to the sideline by deep vein thrombosis, Wembanyama was probably a lock to win this award.

It might be a wide-open race now with Golden State's Draymond Green (-500) favored over Cleveland's Evan Mobley (+400) and Oklahoma City's Luguentz Dort (+600).

Expect Atlanta's Dyson Daniels, an absolute steals machine, to get some

votes as well. He's a longshot at +4000 according to BetMGM.

MOST IMPROVED PLAYER

This is where Daniels is the favorite, a sizable one (-625) over Detroit's Cade Cunningham (+350). One would think that the Los Angeles Clippers' Ivica Zubac and Miami's Tyler Herro — both long shots in terms of betting odds — would get some consideration as well.

Cunningham should be a lock for All-NBA, which is probably his preference anyway.

COACH OF THE YEAR

Like MVP, there might not be a wrong choice atop the ballot and serious arguments can be made for Cleveland's Kenny Atkinson (led Cavs to top spot in East in Year 1 of his time there), Detroit's J.B. Bickerstaff (led Pistons to the playoffs in Year 1 of his time there) and Daigneault, whose Thunder have been elite all season.

It'll likely come down to Atkinson and Bickerstaff. The Cavs were a second-round team last year under Bickerstaff, so it's no surprise that they're good — though No. 1-seed-type good might have been a surprise. And Detroit has been one of the league's feel-good stories all year.

This could be a year where the award is essentially split. A panel of writers and broadcasters vote on the official NBA award, but the National Basketball Coaches Association has its own award voted on by head coaches — and the media vote and coaches vote haven't always come out the same way.

OBITUARIES

CHARLENE FRAZIER

MANNING — Charlene Frazier, 59, died Friday, April 4, 2025, at her residence, 3552 Mallett Road, Manning. She was born July 12, 1965, in Bronx, New York, a daughter of the late James and Mary Frazier.

These services have been entrusted to Samuels Funeral Home LLC of Manning.

CAROLYN M. REDICK

Carolyn M. Redick, 96, widow of Elihu Redick, passed away Friday, April 4, 2025, at Prisma Health Tuomey.

Born May 9, 1928, in Kershaw County, she was a daughter of the late Norman McCaskill and the late Bernice Bradley McCaskill. She was a former active member of Ashwood Baptist Church and retired from J.C. Penney Company.

Survivors include three children, Susan Tindall, Dwight Redick (Sue) and Hugh Redick; seven grandchildren; four great-grandchildren; and beloved nieces and nephews.

A graveside service will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday, May 10, 2025, at Pleasant Hill Baptist Church Cemetery in Bethune.

Elmore-Cannon-Stephens Funeral Home and Crematorium of Sumter is in charge of the arrangements.

JAMES EDWARD DIZZLEY

BISHOPVILLE — Mr. James Edward Dizzley of Bishopville transitioned to his eternal rest on Thursday, April 3, 2025, at East Cooper Medical Center, Charleston.

Funeral arrangements will be announced at a later time and have been entrusted to Square Deal Funeral Home, 106 McIntosh St., Bishopville.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at esquaredealfun@sc.rr.com.

GENELL HAM

OLANTA — Genell Ham, 58, died Saturday, April 5, 2025, at McLeod Hospice House, Florence. She was born Dec. 29, 1966, in Manning, a daughter of Rembert Ham and the late Mary Nell Kennedy Ham.

The family is receiving friends at her residence, 2907 American Ave., Olanta.

These services have been entrusted to Samuels Funeral Home LLC of Manning.

SAMUEL SARGENT SR.

Samuel Sargent Sr., 78, son of the late Willie R. Sargent Sr. and Mable Anderson Sar-

gent, was born on May 2, 1946, in Sumter. He departed this life on Sunday, April 6, 2025, at his residence.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.

KIMBRELLY MARIE SEGARS

Kimberly Marie Segars, 36, daughter of Roberta Yvette McCray Segars and the late William Jeffrey Segars Sr., was born on Nov. 10, 1988, in Fort Bragg, North Carolina. She departed this life on Thursday, March 27, 2025, at her residence.

Public viewing was held on Tuesday, April 8, 2025, from 2 to 6 p.m. at Job's Mortuary Inc.

Funeral services will be held at noon Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at Salem Chapel & Heritage Center, 101 S. Salem Ave.

Family will receive friends at the home, 350 Harmony Court, Apt. 37, Sumter.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.

Online memorials may be sent to the family at jobsmortuaryinc@gmail.com, or visit us on the web at www.jobsmortuary.net.

RONALD BERNARD BLANDING

Ronald Bernard Blanding, 65, son of Robert Lee Blanding and Barbara Jean Franklin Blanding, was born on Sept. 5, 1959, in Sumter. He departed this life on Friday, April 4, 2025, at Prisma Health Tuomey Hospital, Sumter.

Family will receive friends at the home, 604 Atlantic Ave., Sumter, daily from 2 to 7 p.m.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.

WILLIE BENJAMIN JR.

Willie Benjamin Jr., 73, son of the late Willie Benjamin Sr. and Mihaly Brunson Benjamin, was born on Sept. 29, 1951, in Lynchburg. He departed this life on Monday, April 7, 2025, at his residence.

Family will receive friends at the home of his daughter, 985 Dover Circle, Sumter.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.

REV. WALTER L. PROCTOR JR.

The Rev. Walter L. Proctor Jr., 94, husband of Elizabeth Newman Proctor, passed away Monday, April 7, 2025, at his home.

Born Sept. 3, 1930, in Oswego, he was a son of

the late Walter L. Proctor Sr. and Hollie Brown Proctor. He was a U.S. Air Force veteran of the Korean War. He retired from Farmers Telephone Cooperative and from the U.S. Civil Service where he served at Shaw Air Force Base, Fort Jackson and Charleston Naval Base. The Rev. Proctor pastored various churches over a span of 50 years in Williamsburg, Clarendon, Sumter and Florence counties. As a ministry, he was well known for passing out red berries and crosses to everyone he met. He was a member of Lewis Chapel Church.

Survivors include his wife of 68 years; three children, the Rev. Walter L. Proctor III (Barbara) of New Zion, Gwen Phillips (Tommy) of Cades and Dena Joye (Doug) of Surfside Beach; seven grandchildren; 12 great-grandchildren; and one great-great-grandchild.

He was preceded in death by a brother, Col. Charles Herbert Proctor; and two sisters, Jessie Mozingo and Mary Lee Freeman.

Funeral services will be held at 4 p.m. Friday, April 11, 2025, at Lewis Chapel Church with the Rev. Jerry Watson, the Rev. Mike Lowder and the Rev. Mel Thompson officiating. Burial will be in the church cemetery.

Pallbearers will be Chase Harrington, Will Joye, Jason Thompson, Trent Atkinson, Skipper Oswald, Mike McGee, Buck Mozingo and Derrick Mozingo.

The family will receive friends from 2 to 3:30 p.m. Friday, April 11, 2025, at Lewis Chapel Church and other times at the home.

Memorials may be made to Lewis Chapel Church, 1510 Plowden Mill Road, Sumter, SC 29153.

Elmore-Cannon-Stephens Funeral Home and Crematorium of Sumter is in charge of the arrangements.

JOHNNY CHRISTOPHER HARKLESS

Johnny Christopher Harkless, husband of Ernessa Jackson Harkless and son of Johnny Harkless and the late Virginia Thomas Harkless, was born on Oct. 18, 1970, in Darlington. He departed this life on Sunday, April 6, 2025, at Sumter East Health and Rehabilitation Center.

Family will receive friends at the home, 517 W. Calhoun St., Sumter, daily from 2 to 7 p.m.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.

MAYO WILSON III

Mayo Wilson III, 43, died Friday, April 4, 2025, at MUSC Kershaw Health Medical Cen-

ter, Camden. Born Dec. 22, 1981, in Sumter, he was the son of Mayo Wilson Jr. and Patricia Young Wilson.

The family will receive relatives and friends at the home of his father, 1004 Simons Weston Road, Eastover, and the home of his uncle and aunt, Alphonso and Annie Y. Simon, 9345 Camden Highway, Rembert.

Funeral arrangements are incomplete and will be announced by the management of Williams Funeral Home Inc., 821 N. Main St., Sumter.

SABRINA ANN HOLLADAY McWILLIAMS

Sabrina Ann Holladay McWilliams, 47, passed away Friday, April 4, 2025, at Prisma Health Richland.

Born Jan. 15, 1978, in Sumter, she was a daughter of Samuel Holladay and Kathy Geddings Thompson. She

was a graduate of the ADN Program at Central Carolina Technical College. Sabrina dreamed of being an ICU nurse, and she made it. She was a member of Green Acres Assembly of God. Sabrina had a big heart and welcomed everyone with open arms. She believed in loving people as they were, no matter their story. Her compassion knew no bounds or conditions, whether someone needed a place to stay or just a listening ear.

Survivors include her father of Summerton; mother of Summerton; three children, Daphane Grace Hall-Rivers of Elgin, Jacob Dylan Gainey of Sumter and Emily Lane Downin (Haley) of Frederica, Delaware; a granddaughter, Raegan Mejia; siblings, Tracie Holladay Benton, Samantha Mathis (Erik), Joshua Holladay (Abby), Jimmy Thompson, Bobbi Johnson (Kevin), Jelenna Wise (Chuck) and Frankie Thompson (Cassie); special friend, Mark Gainey; and numerous aunts, uncles, nieces and nephews.

She was preceded in death by her maternal grandparents, Charlie and Helen Geddings; paternal grandparents, Marion and Doris Holladay; brother, Billy Thompson; and stepfather, Frank Thompson.

A memorial service will be held at 1 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at Green Acres Assembly of God with the Rev. Michael Bowman officiating.

The family will receive friends from noon to 1 p.m. Wednesday, April 9, 2025, at Green Acres Assembly of God.

Memorials may be made to Green Acres Assembly of God, 537 Lewis Road, Sumter, SC 29154.

Elmore-Cannon-Stephens Funeral Home and Crematorium of Sumter is in charge of the arrangements.

REV. AVA MICHELE KERSHAW HARRIS

The Rev. Ava Michele Kershaw Harris died on Friday, March 28, 2025, in Titusville, Florida.

She was a graduate of the University of South Carolina, Columbia, where she also served as the Touch of Faith Gospel choir director and a member of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Iota Xi Chapter.

She was the former pastor of Zion Hill AME Church of Santee, and St. Luke AME Church and Mt. Pisgah AME Church, both of Cameron. Her final assignment was St. Mary AME Church of Osteen, Florida. She was also previously employed as a chaplain with the South Carolina Department of Corrections.

She is survived by her husband, the Rev. Wilbert (WJ) Harris; children, Angela (Henry) Carter, Cassandra (Randal) Smith, Jaxondalyn (Michael) Bandstra, Keonte (Jason) Martin, Lakeyea Harris, Taylor Harris and Christian (Tatyana) Harris; 19 grandchildren; sister, Sharon Roberts; her Atkinson and Loney cousins, and many friends.

A memorial service will be held at Wayman Chapel AME Church, 160 N. Kings Highway, Sumter, on Saturday, April 12, 2025, at 1 p.m. There will be a Delta Sigma Theta Sorority Omega Omega service at noon prior to the memorial service.

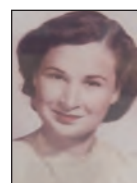
For further information, please visit <https://www.palmermemorialchapel.com>.

DELSHAUN LATRESE MARTIN

Delshaun Latrese Martin, 44, daughter of the late Herbert Martin and Mary Wilson Martin, was born on Nov. 4, 1980, in Bishopville. She departed this life on Saturday, April 5, 2025, in Sumter.

Family will receive friends at 16 Highland Ave., Sumter, daily from 2-8 p.m.

Job's Mortuary Inc., 312 S. Main St., Sumter, is in charge of arrangements.



REDICK



SEGARS



McWILLIAMS



HARRIS



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Part-time help needed for an elderly couple. CPR, housekeeping & meal prep in Sumter. Sign-on bonus. Call or text 202-351-1188.

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