

The Houston Home Journal

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Weekend, April 18, 2026

Accidental shooting at Kroger injures four



Brieanna Smith/HHJ

The accidental shooting took place at Kroger on Highway 96 in Warner Robins.

By **BRIANNA SMITH**
HHJ Managing Editor
brieanna@hhjonline.com

WARNER ROBINS — An accidental shooting at a local grocery store injured four people in Warner Robins on Wednesday night.

According to a press release, on April 15, around 9:15 p.m., officers responded to the Kroger at 774 Highway 96. Law enforcement responded to an accidental shooting.

Preliminary investigation showed a customer was carrying a firearm in their pocket. The gun shot as they were retrieving another item. The bullet struck the floor and broke apart, injuring four adults.

Three were treated on scene and one was taken to Emory Healthcare for non-life-threatening injuries. Police said one victim had more serious injuries after leaving the scene and was transported to Grady Hospital for surgery.

Haseya Women's Club holds groundbreaking ceremony for its first inclusive playground

By **SANDRA HERNANDEZ**
HHJ Staff Writer
sandra@hhjonline.com

PERRY — Years ago, the Haseya's Women Club

sought the City of Perry's help to create an inclusive playground. The group's dream is closer to reality with a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday at

Magnolia Point Park.

The Haseya Women's Club started in 2019 as a service league. The club raised about \$1 million for equipment.

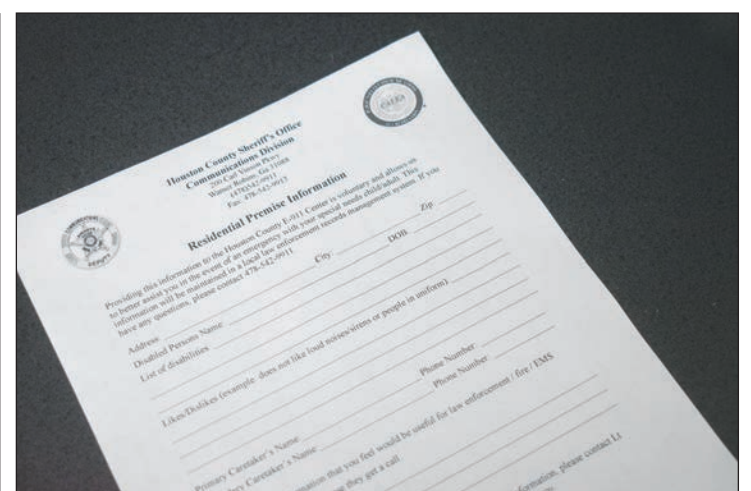
Avoly Wainwright and Melissa Murphy, co-chairs of the Haseya Playground project, are passionate

See **PLAYGROUND** page 3A



Sandra Hernandez/HHJ

Haseya Women's Club and city officials hold a groundbreaking ceremony on Tuesday, April 14, at Magnolia Point Park.



911 center program helps calls with special needs go smoother

By **BRIANNA SMITH**
HHJ Managing Editor
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HOUSTON COUNTY — Encounters with first responders can often be stressful, especially for people with disabilities. A local agency has a program that hopes to make interactions smoother.

The Houston County

E-911 Center's Residential Premise Form, described by center director Capt. Veronica Edens, is a way to tell first responders you or a loved one has a special need.

Edens said anyone with a disability or medical need is welcome to fill out the form.

See **CALLS** page 2A



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PERIODICAL

Warner Robins surgeon accused of buying, selling stolen vehicles

By **OWEN JONES**
HHJ Staff Writer
owen@hhjonline.com

WARNER ROBINS — An Emory Healthcare-Warner Robins surgeon has been accused of buying and selling stolen vehicles for his rental car business.

Dr. Patrick Nahr-Martey was arrested on Friday and charged with counts of theft by receiving stolen property and possession of a vehicle with an altered Vehicle Identification Number (VIN).

See **SURGEON** page 2A



Nahr-Martey

Perry PD offering women, senior firearm classes

By **SANDRA HERNANDEZ**
HHJ Staff Writer
sandra@hhjonline.com

PERRY — The Perry Police Department will host two firearm safety classes geared towards women and senior citizens later this month.

Police Chief Alan Everidge said the department often receives requests from people who live alone or are curious about how to shoot. In response, the department hosts classes multiple times a year and tailors them to different groups.

Everidge said women often feel intimidated alongside men, leading the department to add a women's-only class.

In the classes, students learn the process of owning a firearm. Instructors will talk about state laws

See **CLASSES** page 2A



Courtesy: Perry Police Department

Attendees practice at a shooting range during a previous class.

Word of the Day

For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen.
— Romans 11:36 (NKJV)

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CAPITOL UPDATES

Our final week under the Gold Dome - Sen. McNeel

The 2026 Legislative Session has officially come to a close, and I now look forward to bringing my work back home to the 18th Senate District, where it matters most.

At the heart of this session was the passage of a balanced, responsible budget. The Fiscal Year 2027 budget reflects what Georgians expect: discipline and support for their families. We have exercised responsible stewardship of your tax dollars, and we are able to invest in key priorities while maintaining Georgia's strong financial position. This includes meaningful support for education, our workforce and our state's largest industry—agribusiness.

We also confronted a hard truth this session. Too many of our children are falling behind in the classroom. When only about a quarter of students are reading on grade level, doing nothing is not an option. That's why we made a serious \$70 million investment to place literacy coaches in every K-3 school and passed the Georgia Early Literacy Act of 2026. These measures will help identify struggling readers earlier, provide targeted support and ensure students are better prepared for long-

GUEST COLUMNIST

STEVEN McNEEL
STATE SENATOR, 18th DISTRICT

term success. Banning cellphones in our schools will keep our students' focus where it matters most — the curriculum.

This year, we took meaningful steps to provide long-term property tax relief for Georgia homeowners. Under legislation passed by the General Assembly, local governments must now cap annual reassessment increases at no more than 3% or the rate of inflation, bringing predictability and protection for families facing rising home values. In addition, counties and cities now have new tools, pending voter approval, to significantly reduce or even eliminate property taxes through local sales tax options like the Floating Local Option Sales Tax (FLOST) and the Local Homestead Option Sales Tax (LHOST).

These measures could save you and your family hundreds of dollars as soon as this year, with even greater relief in the years ahead. In many

communities, homeowners could see their property tax bills cut in half or, in some cases, eliminated entirely, while ensuring that growth and investment remain balanced and sustainable.

We also passed House Bill 463 to help you keep more money in your pocket. This bill will gradually reduce the state income tax rate to 3.99% while increasing the standard deduction to \$18,000 for individuals and \$36,000 for families over the next several years. By lowering the tax burden and allowing more income to remain tax-free, this legislation provides meaningful relief as many Georgians continue to feel the strain of rising gas and grocery prices.

Finally, I am proud to announce that House Bill 651 has passed both chambers of the General Assembly and now awaits the Governor's signature. This bill will regulate automated traffic enforcement safety devices in school zones, which have become

profit generators instead of safety tools. HB 651 will require local governments to hold a referendum to approve these speed-detection cameras and to establish clear guidelines on when and how they operate. Additionally, if the Department of Public Safety finds evidence of misuse, the speed camera permits can be revoked, ensuring bad actors are held accountable if they try to take advantage of their community's trust. These tools should be used solely to protect students, and HB 651 puts guardrails in place to ensure profiting off of citizens never gets in the way of that goal.

Although the legislative session has ended, my commitment to serving Senate District 18 remains constant. It is an honor to serve you and your family, and I look forward to seeing you back home in the district. Thank you for your support every step of the way.

Although the legislative session has ended, my commitment to serving Senate District 18 remains constant. It is an honor to serve you and your family, and I look forward to seeing you back home in the district. Thank you for your support every step of the way.

Sen. Steven McNeel represents the 18th Senate District, which includes Crawford, Monroe, Peach and Upson counties, as well as portions of Houston and Macon-Bibb counties. He may be reached by phone at (404) 463-2593 or by email at Steven.McNeel@senate.ga.gov.

Chancellor Perdue to retire, ending historic political career

By TTAGAMI
Bureau Chief
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — Georgia Chancellor Sonny Perdue announced Wednesday that he will retire from his job overseeing the state's 25 public colleges and universities, ending a career that spanned more than four decades, from service on a local zoning board to the cabinet of President Donald Trump, with two terms as governor in between.

"As I prepare to retire, I'm grateful for our presidents, faculty and staff, our students

and the many communities that make up this remarkable system," Perdue said in a statement. He did not give a definitive date, saying he would leave the post after a national search finds a successor.

Just over four years ago, on April 1, 2022, Perdue assumed leadership of a higher education system that now has a \$12.1 billion budget, with 54,000 employees and 382,000 students.

Enrollment has grown during his tenure.

"Under his leadership, the system has seen record enrollment, modernized campuses and advanced medical education, including the launch of UGA's new School of Medicine," Gov. Brian Kemp said in a statement, adding that Perdue's time leading the University System of Georgia "has solidified a legacy of impact that will continue for generations to come."

A native of Perry, Perdue attended undergraduate and graduate school at the University of Georgia, earning a veterinarian medical degree. He flew in the U.S. Air Force and owned an agricultural business.

He started his political career in the 1980s, on the Houston County Planning and Zoning Board, before making his way to the state Senate in 1991. He chaired the Senate Higher Education Committee and rose to the top rung for a senator as President Pro Tem.

In 2003, he made history by becoming the first Republican to occupy the Georgia governor's office

ran the VIN through a national database with no results.

The vehicle was out of Florida, but the title number began with the letter "L", which added suspicion that the title was fake.

Narh-Martey told deputies he owned a rental car business and purchased a 2019 Dodge Challenger Hellcat on Facebook Marketplace for \$44,500.

Deputies could not

locate the Challenger from the VIN. The title instead belonged to a 2021 Dodge Challenger and was collected for evidence.

District Attorney Eric Edwards said Narh-Martey is accused of knowingly buying and selling stolen vehicles. The DA's Office is confident the case will reach prosecution.

Edwards said the case is still under investigation.

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CLASSES

From page 1A

on carrying and concealing, and fundamentals, from loading and unloading to marksmanship.

Attendees will also learn gun safety, risks, and when to use a firearm.

Everidge said they want attendees to understand the law and what to do in certain situations.

The program ends with attendees going to the shooting range to put their lessons into practice.

"It's an opportunity to become familiar with the laws, firearm safety skills and basic gun handling skills so they can be a little more comfortable," he said.

Everidge said previous students become engaged and proficient in their firearm skills, while others realize it is not for

them. Programs are for the public, and another way the police department gives back.

The police department noticed that both groups have a willingness to learn about firearms for different reasons. Everidge said that senior citizens may experience issues that their younger classmates don't have, like arthritis in their hands or vision problems.

Everidge has heard stories from widows whose husbands had a handgun, but they are afraid of touching it. He said in some cases, they hear a noise in their house and want to defend themselves, but they are scared of using the firearm.

"What we try to do is help people learn if they're going to have [a firearm,] how to be safe with one," he said.

When the program first

started, the department only hosted classes for women. Men were interested in attending as well. Later, the department started a class for seniors.

Everidge said the women and senior citizen classes are the most attended.

"We try our best every day to figure out ways that we can help and serve our community. ... This is a way that we can help teach the people in our community safety with a firearm, safety around their own home. It's just another community outreach," he said.

Everidge said the classes provide valuable information.

"We think this is a great tool and a great class for those to attend. We can help answer those questions and take away a little bit of that nervousness," he said.

The Women's Firearm

Safety class will be on Tuesday, April 28 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Range time is Saturday, May 2, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The Senior Citizen Firearm Safety class will start on Thursday, April 30, from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. Range time is Saturday, May 2, from 9 a.m. to 11 a.m.

The classes take place at the Perry Police Department, 1207 Washington Street. The shooting range is located at 261 Toomer Road.

Attendees must provide their own handgun, ammo and ear protection.

The deadline to register is on Friday, April 24.

To find out more information and to register, visit: <https://perry-ga.gov/perry-police-department-events>.

CALLS

From page 1A

"It could be individuals that have autism. It could be they're elderly and they live alone, they're disabled. ... The form gives us information to better assist those individuals," she said.

Information is relayed to first responders. For example, a person in crisis who dislikes bright lights or noise can request no lights or sirens.

Police knowing what an individual likes is key for calming. EMS and firefighters can also be aware of medical needs. The form also gives first responders caretaker contact information.

"If we tell our officers, 'This person likes basketball,' they know that they can go into it talking about basketball. Sometimes that deescalates the situation so that it's safe for

everyone involved," Edens said.

The program is part of Logan's Law, a state bill that passed in 2021.

Houston County opted-in to the program soon after the bill's passing. Residents voluntarily register their information.

Information is stored securely in-house; only the 911 center and first responders have access. In accordance to Logan's Law, information is verified and updated every six months.

Edens pushed for the program to help the autism community and provide resources to first responders. The cause hit close to home for Edens, who has a son with Autism.

Autism is the main focus due to its relevance, but the program is available for any physical or mental conditions.

"It can be kids, it can be adults ... It could be

that somebody has serious medical [conditions.] We like to be able to have that information to assist them. It can be a range of anything," she said.

Parents who opt into the program can feel at ease knowing first responders have accurate information.

"It makes me feel better knowing that law enforcement, fire and EMS knows how to approach my child safely so he doesn't get overwhelmed," Edens said. Participation is free and a benefit.

"Anything to assist our children and adults to ensure that they are safe, is something that we can't take for granted," Edens said. "We would love you to contact us so that we can sign you up for this program."

To sign up, contact Edens directly at vedens@houstoncountyga.gov or call (478) 542-9911.

SURGEON

From page 1A

A Houston County Sheriff's Office incident report said a deputy responded to the Houston County Tag Office in July 2024. An employee identified Narh-Martey after bringing in a suspected fake title. The employee

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CALENDAR

Houston County Celebrates Earth Day

April 18 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
2030 Kings Chapel Road, Perry

Houston County will celebrate Earth Day at the Houston County Extension Pavilion. This free family event will offer learning stations, craft projects, educational exhibits, face painting, and more.

Two exhibitors will bring wildlife and be available to answer questions. Vendors will also be onsite to offer a variety of items for sale, including plants.

Earth Day has been observed since 1970 to promote protecting the environment and raise awareness about preserving Earth's resources.

For more information, call the extension office at (478) 987-2028. To learn more about the UGA Extension office, visit www.extension.uga.edu.

Warner Robins Community Concert Association

April 19 | 3 p.m.
205 N. Davis Drive, Warner Robins

The WRCCA proudly presents Mary Stephenson and Sarah Divakar on violin and harp at First United Methodist Church.

Mary Stephenson and Sarah Divakar performed for us at our Kaleidoscope Concert in 2024. Their performance on the violin and harp was enchanting! We are so pleased that they are now returning as featured artists.

Stephenson currently teaches violin at Mikado Academy of Music and maintains a vibrant private studio. She previously taught at Young America Music Schools, Gordon College through

the Continuing Education Department, and also began a violin program at First Presbyterian Day School.

As a performer, Ms. Stephenson provides music for weddings as a soloist or with various ensembles including cello, harp and guitar, performs in the musical productions of various churches and participated in the folk band The Lady Grands.

Sarah Divakar set up her own studio in 2013, and continued teaching via video lessons after moving to Macon in 2016. She has performed as part of an orchestra for church cantatas, as well as both classical and sacred solo pieces. Currently, she balances practicing and performing at her home church (Berean Baptist in Macon) with mothering her three young children.

Heart of GA Philatelic Society

April 21 | 6 p.m.
4088 Watson Blvd., Suite 600, Warner Robins

The next meeting of the Heart of Georgia Philatelic Society is coming up soon! The meeting is open to everyone interested in stamp collecting and postal history.

Every meeting features door prizes, appraisals, free magazines and other literature, and a mini swap meet where you can buy and trade stamps, covers, supplies and related materials.

For more information, send an email to chief_rod@yahoo.com or call (478) 636-8684.

21st Annual Old Book Sale

April 23 - April 25
Thu. & Fri. 9 a.m. - 7 p.m.
Sat. 9 a.m. - 3 p.m.
401 Golden Isles Pkwy, Perry

Houston County Friends of

the Library is hosting the 21st annual Old Book Sale at the GA National Fairgrounds in the Georgia Grown/Baby Barn Building.

Over 90,000 books in 60 categories will be in the building ready for sale.

Admission will be \$10 on Thursday from 9 a.m. to noon and \$5 from noon to 7 p.m.

Admission will be free on Friday and Saturday. All items half price on Saturday!

Cash, check, credit, and debit all accepted. Convenience fee for electronic transactions.

For more information, please email: hocofriendsoft-helibrary@gmail.com or, visit houpl.org, click "Support the Library," click "Friends of the Library".

Find us on Facebook: Houston County Friends of the Library.

Middle Flint Board Meeting

April 26 | 4:30 p.m.
542 Richardson St., Montezuma

The Middle Flint Health and Wellness Community Service Board Meeting will be held at Flint Area Consolidated Housing Authority in Montezuma.

The meeting is open to the public with link and agenda available upon request. For more information, please contact Elaina Ethridge at (229) 815-5113.

PHS Class of 76 Fish Fry

May 2, 2026
1101 WF Ragin Dr, Perry

Police Week Observance

May 10 - May 16
Various locations, Warner Robins

During National Police Week, the Warner Robins Police Department will host several events to honor law enforcement officers who have lost their lives in the line of duty and to recognize the dedication and service of officers who continue to protect the community.

Night of Blue Lights Food Truck Roundup

May 14 | 6 - 9 p.m.
105 Mulberry Court, Warner Robins

This special edition of the Food Truck Roundup coincides with Police Week and highlights the work of local law enforcement and first responders. Residents are encouraged to come out, enjoy great food, and show their support for those who serve.

'10 Good Men' Premiere

May 24, 2026 | 5 p.m.
651 Mulberry St., Macon

TJ3 History's feature documentary "10 Good Men" will have its world premiere at the historic Piedmont Grand Opera House in Macon, followed by a live Q&A with our director and associate producer.

The 90-minute film captures the firsthand combat stories of ten of the last remaining World War II veterans who flew the iconic B-17 Flying Fortress — the equivalent of a single full crew during the war. It features rare restored and colorized archive footage, narration by Emmy Award-winning voice talent Dan Nachtrab, and has already received rave reviews from New York Times best-selling authors and respected Air Force historians.

This premiere feels especially meaningful in Middle Georgia, home to Robins Air Force Base and one of the highest concentrations of veterans in the state. Memorial Day Weekend is the perfect time to honor these aging heroes before their voices are lost to time, and screening their stories in the beautiful Piedmont Grand Opera House adds an extra layer of local significance.

Our entire crew, which has spent three years on this project, is based right here in Warner Robins, making this a true hometown production from the team behind TJ3 History.

Betty Sapp Hewitt

Warner Robins — Betty Sapp Hewitt, age 92, entered into the arms of her loving Savior on April 9, 2026. She was born on January 4, 1934, in Tifton, Georgia, to the late George and Dorcas Tanner Sapp, and was raised in Macon, Georgia, where she spent her formative years building a strong foundation of faith and family that guided her throughout her life.

As a devoted military wife, Betty embraced a life of travel and adventure, supporting her family as they lived in various locations across the country. In 1968, they settled in Warner Robins, Georgia, where she would make her home for many years.

Betty began her career working at Houston Speech and Hearing before continuing her professional journey at Robins Air Force Base. There, she served in Civil Service within the Civil Engineering department, dedicating many years of faithful work before retiring.

Betty was a woman of many talents and passions. She found great joy in her hobbies, especially ceramics and doll-making, where her creativity and attention to detail truly shined. She also loved working in her yard, tending to her flowers and creating beauty outdoors. She especially cherished time spent traveling with her sisters, creating memories that she held close to her heart. Painting brought her peace, and she enjoyed playing cards with friends and loved ones. These simple pleasures brought her

immense happiness and were a reflection of her vibrant and artistic spirit.

Betty was also a faithful member of Shirley Hills Baptist Church, where her faith remained a cornerstone of her life. She was a proud member of the Red Hat Society, where she enjoyed fellowship and fun with dear friends.

In addition to her parents, Betty was preceded in death by her sisters, Juanita Massey and Dorothy Deane.

Her memory will forever be treasured by her children, Jana Barrineau (Roy) of Macon, Georgia, Tim Hewitt (Mary) of Seabek, Washington, and Art Hewitt of Thomaston, Georgia; grandchildren, Lee Barrineau (Mary), Ross Barrineau (Jenny), Betsy Barrineau, William Aman, Jesse Hewitt, Barry Beverly, Marie Pitts, and Angie Self; thirteen great-grandchildren; twelve great-great-grandchildren; and sisters, Sally Harrell and Patricia Smith.

Visitation will be on Saturday, April 18, 2026, from 1:00 p.m. until 2:00 p.m. at McCullough Funeral Home with a funeral service immediately following in the chapel. Afterward, Betty will be laid to rest in Magnolia Park Cemetery.

For friends unable to attend at this time, the service will be streamed live at <https://www.youtube.com/@McCulloughFuneralHome> via the McCullough Funeral Home's YouTube page.

McCullough Funeral Home and Crematory has the privilege of being entrusted with these arrangements.

Warner Robins man sentenced to 25 for trafficking cocaine

By OWEN JONES
HHJ Staff Writer
owen@hhjonline.com

WARNER ROBINS—Gregory Ford, 51, of Warner Robins, pled guilty to trafficking cocaine on Monday. He was immediately sentenced to 25 years in prison and a \$1,000,000 fine.

Ford had three prior convictions for drug possession and the intent to distribute.

The WRPD Narcotics Intelligence Unit (NIU) had a pending investigation on Ford in June 2024. Through informants, they knew Ford was selling drugs at 114 Margaret Drive in Warner Robins.

Investigators executed controlled buys from Ford and obtained arrest and search warrants for the residence. The NIU made entry on July 3, 2024.

Ford and a few others were found inside and arrested. The Houston County District Attorney's Office said the officers saw drugs, scales and packaging material.

Officers found over two pounds of cocaine, a trafficking amount in Georgia,



Ford

40 grams of marijuana and close to \$1,000 in cash.

Investigator Chad Strom of the Warner Robins Police Department investigated the case. Ford was prosecuted by Senior Assistant District Attorney Mike Smith.

Smith said the DA's Office will continue to prioritize going after career traffickers.

District Attorney Eric Edwards said this sentencing sends a clear message to those who traffic narcotics in Houston County: they will face serious consequences.

PLAYGROUND

From page 1A

about Houston County's first inclusive playground.

Wainwright's child has a disability. When her son was two, he suffered a brain injury and had a life-saving surgery in 2022. He could play on a traditional playground again; however, this is not always the case.

Murphy is an occupational therapist who helps many children with disabilities.

She and Wainwright met years ago and quickly realized, although they have different perspectives, they share a vision. Murphy chose the equipment.

"We're just really excited to have a place for inclusion to be possible," Murphy said.

The playground will span approximately 18,000 square feet, designed to accommodate

a wide range of physical and sensory needs.

The park will have a bouncy surface, so a child will not be hurt if they fall. It will also be wheelchair and mobility-device accessible.

Communication boards will be available for non-verbal children. There will be multiple options for kids to interact.

Wainwright said the club wants parents to know their children will have a fun and safe time. Murphy hopes the playground will be the first of many and a foundation for inclusivity, appealing to families who may feel isolated.

"To have a place [where] we can all come together is really important to us," she said.

The club anticipates the playground will open in the summer. Magnolia Point Park is located at 148 Langston Road.

LIVE MUSIC

<p>SATURDAY, APRIL 18</p> <p>EATONTON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dallas Rodgers Band: Pals Watering Hole - 9pm <p>UNADILLA - ANGEL CITY MOTORCYCLE RALLY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cali Mob - 4:30pm • Mix Tape - 6:30pm • Jeremiah James - 8:30pm • A Foreigners Journey to Boston - 10:30pm <p>HAWKINSVILLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To The Limit - The Ultimate Eagles Experience: Opera House - 7pm (\$35 and up) <p>VIDALIA</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reckless Soul Band: Earnie's Lounge - 9pm <p>FORSYTH</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • John D Neal: The Den - 8-11pm <p>PERRY</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Music Side of Town Blues Band: Perry Farmer's Market - 	<p>9am-1pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ground Hum: My Bar <p>- 9pm</p> <p>MILLEDGEVILLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josh Courson & Company: Duke's Dawg House - 8pm • Modern Mischief: Amici's - 10pm <p>WARNER ROBINS</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jason Taylor Hobbs: Pub 96 - 4:30pm • Tres Hombres: Snapper's Lounge - 8-11pm • Wartner Underground: Pub 96 - 9:30pm <p>MACON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affinity: American Legion - 7-10pm (\$10 / \$5 for Veterans / Free for member Veterans) • Lady Creech: Fish-N-Pig - 7:30-10:30pm • Purple Madness - Prince Tribute: The Society Garden - 	<p>8pm</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NyteByrd: Mr. E's Sports Bar & Grill - 9pm • Good Company: Wild Wing Cafe - 9pm • Rachel Forehand - "Blackwater" Album release show: Grant's Lounge - 9pm <p>HAWKINSVILLE</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Powersville Opry - 390 Perry Hwy: --> House Band - 4:15-6:45pm • --> Guest Band - 7-9pm <p>GORDON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open Acoustic Jam: Jelly Elephant - 8pm <p>SUNDAY, APRIL 19</p> <p>MACON</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direwoof & The Page Brothers Band: Fish-N-Pig - 1-5pm • Open Mic/Jam Session: Grant's Lounge - 9pm
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Community Calendar

Email your information to:

brianna@hhjonline.com

Houston Home Journal

478-987-1823

1210 Washington St.
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VIEWPOINTS

The Houston Home Journal

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Our Goal

The Houston Home Journal is published for the citizens of Houston and surrounding counties by a division of The Georgia Trust for Local News. Our goal is to produce quality, profitable, community-oriented newspapers that you, our readers, are proud of. We will reach that goal through hard work, teamwork, loyalty and a strong dedication towards printing the truth.

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Share Your Viewpoint

There are three ways to submit a Letter to the Editor: Email it to brianna@hhjonline.com, mail it to Houston Home Journal at 1210 Washington St., Perry, GA 31069, or drop it off at the same location between 8:30 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday-Friday. Letters must include the writer's name, address and telephone number (the last two not to be printed). The newspaper reserves the right to edit or reject letters for reasons of grammar, punctuation, taste and brevity.

P.O. Box 1910
1210 Washington Street, Perry, GA 31069
478-987-1823

The call is coming from inside the house

NEW SOUTHERN DAD

KYLE DOMINY



I was brushing my teeth when I heard a chirping noise come from the next room. My brain did not register the sound at first. It had been a typical Thursday morning and I was getting ready for another day at the office, and I assumed the bird-like noise was a notification on one of the too-many cell-phones in my house.

But then I heard it again, louder, and more lifelike than before. "Is there a bird in the house?" I thought to myself as I peered around the corner, toothbrush still at work.

Sure enough, perched on the ceiling fan, was a bird. I'm no ornithologist, but I think it was a mockingbird. That explains why it sounded like it was making fun of me.

"You let a bird in the house," I hollered at no one in particular, though with a mouthful of toothpaste it sounded more like "Youph mlet um buhrd ihn da huse."

As it turns out, my wife had just let the dog out, and the bird must have let itself in during the process. I reopened the door and began a hasty pursuit of the invader. There was no way I could catch it, and my only hope was for it to leave the way it came. My scheme worked, and the bird's visit came to an end as quickly as it began.

I never even put down my toothbrush. Proper oral hygiene should be a part of everyone's daily routine.

And thankfully so, because my wife was no

help at all. It is worth noting that my spouse is terrified of birds. When she discovered a flying creature had breached the walls, she backed into the corner, frozen in fear.

The call was coming from inside the house.

Fans of old horror movies will get the reference. It goes back to an urban legend that started circulating in the 1960s. A babysitter in an unassuming subdivision gets repeatedly, threatening phone calls from a stranger who knows her every move. No matter what she does, the psychopath sees everything and can even predict her next move.

She contacts the authorities who work to trace the source of the phone calls, and, spoiler alert, the calls were coming from inside the house. That myth grew into the plot of a dozen or more films.

No, a bird isn't a maniacal killer bent on terrorizing others, but try explaining that to my better half. I don't even keep bird feeders around the house because I don't want to encourage these critters, as important as they are to any ecosystem, from hanging around longer than they have to.

The National Audubon Society claims that bird watching is good for mental health. Apparently there is research to suggest that regularly observing a bird on the wing brings a sense of calm and rejuvenation, helping improve brain function.

That may be so, but let's keep it outside next time.

The Irish fantasy is relevance

A land that celebrates fairies, leprechauns, and rainbows is bound to carry a few misplaced real-world ideas. Ireland does.

My dear Ireland is in a pickle. EU-style protester roadblocks have choked off petrol deliveries to roughly half the country. The government's response? "Wait it out"—which is to say, do nothing. I know this firsthand: Alden's honeymoon was disrupted by the blockages.

The broader EU habit of unrest is perplexing—fits thrown over things largely beyond local control. Ireland, for example, has no real influence over a war with Iran. Historically, it hasn't projected military power at all. It stayed neutral in World War II, offering help only at the margins. When your leverage is limited, abstention becomes policy.

That said, EU membership hasn't been an unqualified disaster. According to my distant cousin Martin O'Gara, who still lives in County Mayo, EU money has improved the infrastructure. Alden, however, reports the roads around the Ring of Kerry remain as narrow and nerve-racking as ever—though that's part of Ireland's charm. What Martin laments is the bureaucracy.

Martin is a sheep and dairy farmer. His land includes Corskeagh—my ancestral patch, so to speak. He told me that when an animal died, the old way was simple: dig a hole and be done with it.

Now, when a cow dies in Éire, the process reads like a parody. First, cover the carcass—officially, to prevent disease spread, though it feels like something out of a zombie movie. Then call the local farm agent, who arrives to confirm the obvi-

COLUMNIST

KELLY BURKE



ous: "Yep, it's dead." Only then can the farmer contact the disposal service—the knacker—which will haul it off for rendering or incineration. Rendering means that the carcass still has some uses. After that comes the paperwork: the death must be logged in an EU database. All within 24–48 hours.

Britain had mad cow disease. Ireland didn't. Still, the EU decided everyone needed the same system—because bureaucracies tend to beget bureaucrats.

Fuel blockades, dead-animal registries, speech regulations—none of it appeals to me.

But Ireland? Still one of

the prettiest places on earth.

Kelly Burke was born in Knoxville, where he spent his younger years, followed by high school years in Atlanta, where he graduated from Georgia Tech and Mercer Law School. He has been in private practice, a magistrate judge, and an elected district attorney. He writes about the law, politics, music, and Ireland. He and his wife enjoy gardening, playing with their Lagotto Ramanolo named George Harrison, and spending time with their grandchildren. To see this column or Kelly's archives, visit www.kellyburke.com. You can email Kelly at dakellyburke@gmail.com.



Some sweet news: Vidalia onions are coming to town

This is a high and holy time. As you read these words, Vidalia onions are being shipped across the nation from sea to shining sea. If you aren't from around these parts, let me tell you what we natives already know. There is nothing like a Vidalia onion. They are sweet enough that you can eat them like an apple and in this whole wide world, they are grown in just 20 counties in South Georgia, including Toombs County whose largest city is, of course, Vidalia.

Folks over in Glennville in Tattnall County will remind you that about half the annual crop comes from there and that at one time it was referred to the Glennville sweet onion, but everybody got together and agreed to call it the Vidalia onion. That's the way we do things in this great state. We may be divided on our politics, but not our onions.

Where does the Vidalia get its sweetness? It is because the soil in these particular counties is sandy and low in sulfur. That contributes to their sweetness. Onions grown in soil high in sulfur compounds tend to have a hot, bitter flavor from the sulfur. That is why people cry when they slice into an ordinary onion. With the sweet Vidalia, you weep with joy.

During the Depression, a farmer named Mose Coleman discovered that

COLUMNIST

DICK YARBROUGH



the onions he had planted were not hot, as onions are supposed to be. They were sweet. It took a while to catch on, but Mose was soon selling his onions like, well, hotcakes. Only better.

Other farmers, who had suffered through the Depression years, followed suit and started producing their own sweet, mild onions. Today, Vidalia sales total around \$90 million and some 5-million 40 lb. boxes are shipped out each season to 49 states and Canada. That's sweet.

By the way, you cannot call an onion a "Vidalia" unless it was grown in the above-mentioned areas of Georgia. Don't even think about it. If you try to foist off a substitute on unsuspecting consumers, you will get a visit from the Georgia Department of Agriculture wherever you are. Federal Marketing Order No. 955 was established in 1989 to help reinforce Georgia state laws and in 1992, the Vidalia onion was trademarked by the state. We don't mess around when it comes to our onions.

If you are in the area, you might want to check out the Vidalia Onion Festival, April 23-26. There's all kind of stuff going on, including concerts, a rodeo and Mimosas and Onions Art where you can "create a one-of-a-kind piece of onion art to take home while sipping on mimosas." Give me enough mimosas and I will create onion art that would make Rembrandt suck wind. The weekend will be capped off by a performance of the Blue Angels. I get goosebumps writing about them, let alone seeing them in person.

Not to be outdone, Glennville has its own festival planned – the 50th annual Glennville Sweet Onion Festival on Saturday, May 9. I note they don't refer to it as the Glennville-Vidalia Sweet Onion Festival, even though Glennville agreed to call it the Vidalia onion back years ago. I am sure there is a reason but I'm staying out of this one. Suffice it to say, I feel strongly both ways.

Glennville won't have

the Blue Angels at their festival, but they will have some neat stuff of their own – a Sweet Onion Run, a Sweet Onion Parade, a Sweet Onion Street Dance and a Turtle Race. The Chamber of Commerce says some 6,000 folks will attend. Not bad for a town of 3,800.

Don't you find it interesting that in the 3.8 million square miles that make up these, the United States of America – including Alaska and Hawaii and the District of Columbia – God saw fit to carve out just 6,000 square miles of sandy and low sulfur soil in 13 counties in Georgia and parts of seven others so we could grow sweet Vidalia onions?

There is no question God loves us. We have the greatest state song in the history of the world, Georgia on My Mind, sung by Ray Charles Robinson, of Albany, Georgia. We have the oldest state-chartered university in the land with four national football championships and 27 Rhodes Scholars. We have the Masters golf tournament. We have the Blue Ridge Mountains and the silver sands of the Georgia coast. And the sweet Vidalia onion. Can I get an amen?

You can reach Dick Yarbrough at dick@dick-yarbrough.com or at P.O. Box 725373, Atlanta, Georgia 31139.

LIFESTYLE & FAITH

Foolhardy to let young sprouts go unweeded

The Minister of Youth in a Baptist church bulletin wrote the following note to parents: "Parents, please make it a priority to have your children with us on Wednesday nights at 6:15. If your children have other friends who are not currently active in another church, do your best to bring them. I am a firm believer that it is easier to reach children for Jesus Christ than older kids. By the time they reach middle school, if Christ is not a priority in their lives, there is a strong possibility he never will be. Then, when it's too late, we wonder where we went wrong."

There has never been a truer statement. By the time children reach 7-8 years of age, they have formed their moral foundation and will carry that value system forward throughout their lives. When children reach teenage status, it is too late to change their moral values.

How soon can a child be saved? Charles Hadden Spurgeon wrote, "as soon as children can learn evil, be assured that they can be competent under the teaching of the Holy Spirit to learn good." Spurgeon urged Sunday School teachers: "Never go into your class with the thought that children cannot comprehend. Children are capable of

PARABLES TO PONDER

BILLY POWELL



salvation."

A good example is Josiah. When he became king of Jerusalem at age 8, he immediately began to seek God's guidance and performed great works by his twelfth birthday.

A person's chances of being saved diminish rapidly with age. As people grow older and become more set in their attitudes, they increasingly resist the life-changing message of Christ. Studies revealed that 95-percent of the people who receive Christ do so before age 25. After the age of 35, only one person in 50,000 receives Christ; after 45 only one in 300,000; and after 75 only one in 700,000 is converted. Hardening of the arteries and hardening of the heart go hand in hand.

The writer of Ecclesiastes warned of the dangers of resisting salvation when one is young: "Don't let the excitement of being young cause you to forget your creator...Remember Him now while you are young, before the silver chord of

life snaps, and the golden bowl is broken, and the dust returns to the earth as it was, and the spirit returns to God."

Evangelistic efforts are usually slanted toward adults at the expense of children. This is inconsistent for in planting a garden, we would be foolhardy to let young sprouts go unweeded during the spring and expect an abundant harvest in the summer.

God cautioned the Israelites escaping from Egyptian bondage to "forget not the things your eyes have seen and teach them to your children and grandchildren." Timothy became Paul's protégé because he was taught the scriptures from childhood by his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois.

We have an awesome responsibility to bring up our children in the "nurture and admonition of the Lord." Jesus said, "Prevent not the children from coming to Me, for such is the Kingdom of God."

The books that built a nation

Long before Dick, Jane and Spot helped us learn to read, there was another iconic set of children's textbooks. In 1835, a small local publishing firm, Truman and Smith, took a gamble on a Miami University professor named William Holmes McGuffey.

Recommended by no less a figure than Harriet Beecher Stowe, McGuffey was commissioned to create a series of graded primers. What followed was a literary phenomenon that would eventually rival the Bible and Webster's Dictionary in the hands of the American public.

Between 1836 and 1960, an estimated 120 million copies of the Eclectic Readers—famously known as the McGuffey Readers—were sold. Even today, over a century after their peak, they continue to move 30,000 copies a year, finding a modern haven in homeschooling and private religious academies.

Before McGuffey, colonial-era texts were often a drudgery of dull, memorized lists. McGuffey changed the game by introducing the "phonics method" and context-based learning.

The series, which eventually grew to six levels, was designed to be increasingly challenging. The first two readers focused on letter identification and vivid storytelling to help children grasp sentence meanings. By the third and

ALL ABOUT ANTIQUES

JILLINDA FALEN



fourth levels, students were tackling vocabulary equivalent to modern middle-school standards. The advanced volumes, compiled largely by William's brother, Alexander Hamilton McGuffey, introduced students to the heavyweights of literature and oratory, including Lord Byron, John Milton, and Daniel Webster.

William McGuffey, a conservative Presbyterian, didn't just want children to read; he wanted them to be "righteous." The early editions were steeped in Calvinist values of piety and salvation.

"McGuffey believed teachers should be active participants, reading aloud and questioning their students," notes one historical analysis. His curriculum emphasized enunciation and public speaking—skills once considered essential for any participating citizen in the 19th century.

However, as America moved from a homogeneous frontier society to a diverse "melting pot," the Readers had to evolve. By the 1879 edition, the heavy theological undertones were stripped

away, replaced by a "civil religion" focused on middle-class morality and national unity.

Interestingly, while McGuffey's name remained on the cover of these revised editions, he had no hand in the changes and reportedly did not approve of the secularization of his life's work.

Though modern workbooks and specialized grade-level texts eventually pushed the Eclectic Readers out of the mainstream market, they never truly vanished. In an era of rapidly changing educational standards, many parents are returning to the Readers for their focus on "sounding-out" words and their unapologetic emphasis on moral character.

From the one-room schoolhouses of the 1800s to the digital-age living rooms of today, the McGuffey legacy remains a cornerstone of the American educational identity.

No waffling. The scoop on fake ice cream

I scream. You scream. We all scream for ice cream!

"Hey kid. You don't want that," I say standing in front of the ice cream truck that ventured into our neighborhood last week. The kid looks at me as if I was strange.

"I'm serious. A drumstick is nothing but bulked up vegetable fats, structure agents and a pharmaceutical surfactant that disrupts the gut barrier. You don't want that."

More strange looks. "Here. Let me show you." I grab the drumstick out of his hand.

"Watch this." I hold it up high in the air. I want to make sure it's in full sun.

"See. Watch this. It won't even melt. It's not even real ice cream. You shouldn't be eating this. Why are you crying? Hey, come back. I'm only trying to look out for your health."

"Hey mister. Why don't you get out of here and stop bothering the kids."

"Hey ice cream man. Why don't you stop selling this junk to the kids and switch to something healthy like broccoli."

"Hey mom," I say about 30 seconds later as she walks up with her youngster. His tears make lines down his cheeks where the dust from playing in the neighborhood has washed off. He is still snorting back snot and slightly catching up his overworked lungs.

"I'm glad you're here. I was just telling your son..." She has a purse. It's heavy. Brick heavy from the feel of it as it collides with my face.

HHJ PUBLISHER

DON MONCRIEF



"No ma'am. I'll never mess with your son again. No ma'am. I don't want to go to jail. Yes ma'am. I'll go back in my house and you'll never see me again. Uh ... yes ma'am. I'll move to another neighborhood. Yes ma'am. I'll shop around for another planet."

Ice cream. I remember as a child it was the highlight of family gatherings. The meal was done. Everybody was sitting around like a fat cat when an adult—the hero of the day—would call out: "Who wants ice cream?"

Us kids would get as excited as a subscriber receiving their latest copy of The Houston Home Journal. The thrill would be dulled after cranking the handle for seemingly forever (thank God when they got an electric one), but the reward: Heaven!

Even I could grasp the simplicity: Whole milk, heavy cream, milk and sugar.

Now days... "Ma'am. You really don't want that," I say at the supermarket (clearly not learning my lesson). "Look at the ingredients. Water. Sugar. Palm oil. Liquid glucose. Vegetable proteins. Stabilizers. Emulsifiers. Artificial vanilla flavoring. Synthetic colors.

"Here watch this. My

'Safe Choice' app." I scan the product while she watches. I can't help but notice her move her purse in the ready position.

"See. A PFA risk of 18 contaminants. That equates to how many synthetic chemicals it probably has in it. Look at this."

I turn the phone so she can see the app. "See. 'No real dairy'. There's a reason they're labeled 'frozen desserts' and not ice cream."

"What about those," she says, pointing at the expensive ones, while also nudging me back a step; into the glass and closer to the threat of her pushing me in the freezer should she so choose.

"I'm glad you asked," I say. "Yes, they are 'real' ice cream. But look. They're at least two dollars more than the others. Company sleight of hand. They make out like they're giving you a choice, but what family with kids can afford these prices on a regular basis? They know which ones you're going to choose, and they don't care if they're not safe for you or your kids."

"I ought to hit them with my purse," she says. "Indeed, you should," I say triumphantly.

"I scream. You scream. These days, we all scream FROM ice cream."

STOP CRIME NOW
742-2330

BALL, JAVEON WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING (F), ENTERING AUTO.	BARBEE, ERICKA WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING.	BENNETT, SONNY WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR GIVING FALSE NAME, DOB, ADDRESS TO OFFICER/ST. CT VOP/THEFT BY TAKING.	BIVINS, BENJAMIN WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR CRIMINAL TRESPASS DAMAGE.
DAVIS, MAKHI WANTED BY THE FORT VALLEY STATE UNIVERSITY CAMPUS POLICE DEPT. FOR BURGLARY-2ND DEGREE, CRIMINAL DAMAGE TO PROPERTY, 2ND DEGREE, AND CRIMINAL TRESPASS.	DAWSON, RAHEEM WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR V.G.C.S.A. POSS. OF MARIJUANA W/INT. TO DISTRIBUTE, WILLFUL OBSTRUCTION OF LAW ENFORCEMENT, HIT & RUN, RECKLESS DRIVING.	GLOVER, JAQUON WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BENCH WARRANT/RACKETEERING.	GRAY, ARCHIE WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR FAILURE TO APPEAR/SIMPLE BATTERY.
HOWARD, TODD WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY TAKING-FELONY.	JORDAN, TRAVION WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY SUB PHYSICAL HARM.	KING, JAHEIM WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SIMPLE BATTERY.	NELSON, TANGIE WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR EXPIRED REGISTRATION/FORGERY - 1ST DEGREE/GIVING FALSE NAME, DOB, ADDRESS TO OFFICER/OTHER DRIVING OFFENSES.
MENDEZ-TOREZ, LUDWIN WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR VIOLATION OF THE SEX OFFENDER REGISTRY.	REEVES, CLAYTON WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BAIL JUMPING/BATTERY - FAMILY VIOLENCE/ BENCH WARRANT/ FAILURE TO APPEAR/ FAILURE TO APPEAR.	ROBINSON, ZION WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR POSS.F/A DURING COMM./POSSESSION OF A FIREARM OF CONVICTED FELON/V.G.C.S.A. POSS. MARIJUANA W. INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE/V.G.C.S.A. POSSESSION OF SCHEDULE I CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE.	SILVER, STERLING WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR 10 COUNTS OF THEFT BY TAKING/THEFT BY DECEPTION.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO PULL CRIMINALS OFF OUR STREETS! Macon Regional Crimestoppers is a local non-profit serving the Bibb, Baldwin, Houston, Jones, Twigg, Crawford, Monroe, and Peach regional areas. Through our deployed systems as well as the cooperation local law enforcement agencies and the 911 Center, citizens in our community have a safe, secure, and confidential means to report crimes. IF A "TIP" RESULTS IN AN ARREST - A REWARD WILL BE PAID TO YOU CONFIDENTIALLY AND ANONYMOUSLY!!

If You Have Information On The Whereabouts Of An Above Shown Individual, Call Our Tip Line at 478-742-2330 or 1-877-68CRIME

ENTERTAINMENT

POP-EYE
BY RANDY MILHOLLAND

MIGHT AS WELL TRY.

AHOY, DAVEY JONES!

NEPHEW! GOOD TO SEE YOU!

HI, UNCLE DAVEY. BEEN A WHILE. I HATE'S TASK FER A FAVOR--

GOOD INSTINCT. TAKE CARE!

HE WOULDN'T BE FAMILY IF HE MADE IT EASY.

WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?!

HOPEFULLY A RESCUE! I'M MR. JACK, AND MY FELLOW CAPTIVES ARE HAPPY HOOLIGAN AND HERR KATZENJAMMER!

THE WITCH IMPRISONED US FOR NONSENSICAL CRIMES. IF YOU COULD FREE US...

YOU LOOK LIKE A STUFFED ANIMAL.

AND YOU LOOK LIKE A NOODLE WHO LEARNED TO HOLD GRUDGES. CAN YOU HELP US NOW?

SORRY, THIS IS LESS OF A RESCUE MISSION AND MORE OF A MATTER OF REVENGE.

IT'S OKAY. I UNDERSTAND...

... PLUS, RELEASING US WOULD MAKE THE WITCH UPSET. YOU DON'T WANT THAT.

YOU'RE LUCKY I'M PETTY.

NOT THE FIRST DAME TO TELL ME THAT. LIKELY WON'T BE THE LAST.

HOCUS-FOCUS
BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Brush is larger. 2. Painted area on fence is larger. 3. Shirt is longer. 4. Man has more hair. 5. Window is larger. 6. Ear is smaller.

Out on a Limb
by Gary Kopervas

LIFE IN A BUCKET...
BO GULLAN
Bucket Hat

BUCKET OF BALLS

BUCKET OF POPCORN

BUCKET OF BEERS

BUCKET OF CHICKEN

CROSSWORD 4-18-26

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- 114 "So Rare" bandleader [1904]
118 Thick-trunked African tree
121 Criminal court of London
122 Designation for the people featured in this puzzle
127 Maui, e.g.
128 Facet
129 Fessed (up)
130 Actress Kemper
131 Depilatory brand
132 Co. honchos
133 Requires
134 Be in power

- CLUES DOWN**
- Key near Ctrl
 - China's -- -tzu
 - Motel's kin
 - Consents verbally
 - Get bored by
 - Recedes
 - Actress Mazar of "Younger"
 - Smile widely
 - Suffix with north
 - Hoarse
 - Rug
 - Healing plant
 - Skiing site
 - Classic neon diner sign
 - Mountain climber, e.g.
 - TV actress Anderson
 - Brazilian berry
 - African nation
 - Klempner and Preminger
 - rug (dance)
 - Raw metal
 - Quad VIP
 - Elis' college
 - Noisy fights
 - Merry song syllables
 - Stitch
 - Mai --
 - Right-angled annexes
 - Covert U.S. org.
 - Steak -- (frozen beef brand)
 - Mauna --
 - Huge time stretch
 - What the number in brackets is for the people featured in this puzzle
 - Stockholm is its capital
 - During a single sitting
 - 1996 Mario Puzo novel, with "The"
 - Farming-related prefix

- Roman 1,551
- Make anew
- Cause of ruin
- Mimicked
- Chances
- Ram's mate
- Muhammad of the ring
- Large
- Money unit of Japan

SUDOKU

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2							1	

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Place a number in the empty boxes in such a way that each row across, each column down and each small 6-box square contains all of the numbers from one to six

3	2	4	6	1	5
2	5	4	3	1	6
6	3	1	5	2	4
1	4	2	5	3	6
4	1	5	2	3	6
5	4	6	3	2	1

Sudoku answer featured above. Crossword answer featured to the left.

BONNIE "MICHELLE" SMITH, Esq.

DOING WHAT IS RIGHT AND FAIR ALWAYS MATTERS.
EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING.

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Perry crushes Warner Robins' playoff hopes



Clay Brown/HHJ

Panthers second baseman Bryson Register (6) flips the ball to shortstop Nathan Sullivan (4) from the ground during a region victory against Warner Robins.



Clay Brown/HHJ

The Warner Robins dugout greets Justyn Hunter (6) after he scored a run in a region game against Perry.

By **CLAY BROWN**
HHJ Sports Editor
clay@hhjonline.com

PERRY — With a 7-5 victory on Monday night, Perry got what might be considered a “twofer.”

Not only did the defeat of Warner Robins (8-15, 2-11 Region 1-4A) secure the Panthers’ (11-14, 6-7 Region) postseason berth, but it also eliminated the Demons from playoff contention.

Warner Robins needed a series sweep to make their first playoff appearance since 2014, and though they threatened in all seven innings they again fell short. It’s more a side effect than it was a goal for

Panthers head coach Denny Bryant, who was just happy that his team found a way to win.

“I was proud of the guys for just finding a way to win. We didn’t play very clean baseball but we did enough to get the win,” Bryant said. “Give Warner Robins credit, now, they wouldn’t go away. They fought to the last inning.”

“There’s been times like this in the past that we’d let things snowball a little bit and they get out of control,” he continued. “We knew we had to win once and we wanted to win tonight so that pressure of just getting into the playoffs wouldn’t linger until Thursday.”

Early it looked like Perry

might run away with it. They benefitted from five straight walks in the first as they took a 3-0 lead and went up 4-1 in the second before a double play ended the inning.

Starter Walker Bland also pitched a good first two, earning five strikeouts (not including a dropped third strike in the first) against nine batters.

But with the Demons’ postseason hopes on the line they didn’t just roll over.

Bland walked his first two batters in the third inning and an error behind the plate scored two runs to pull Warner Robins within one. Drew White, who was without a question the Demons’ best player on Monday,

knocked the equalizer into left field with one out in the fourth inning.

But Tyson Peters’ triple and Reid Ginn’s single all but dashed those hopes in the fifth inning as the Panthers took a 7-4 lead.

Bland didn’t finish the game, but he stuck through until the fifth inning before sophomore Tripp Walker finished the game out.

The senior ended his senior night start with 4.2 innings pitched, nine strikeouts and three earned runs.

“I think Walker Bland did a great job for us on the mound. That’s his third start. His first start was against Benedictine, which that’s the game that we beat them,” Bryant said.

“He stepped in a big way being a senior with some of the injuries we’ve had to our [pitching] staff.”

It’s been a roller coaster of a season for Perry. University of Georgia commit Connor Langdon has only pitched four games this season and his last start was March 20.

Bryant said they’ve missed their top three arms for significant stretches of the season, but they’ve had some players step up to be battle tested in a tough region schedule.

“We’ve definitely been tested,” Bryant said. “[We] had some chances to win some of those games early in region play but didn’t make enough plays. It’s

good to get some wins [late in the region schedule...I’m just happy to see these guys see a little bit of success.”

“They work hard all year. We’ve dealt with some injuries to our pitching staff,” he continued. “We’ve had young guys step up, our defense has stepped up and made plays and our offense continues to score runs. So that’s been good to see.”

UP NEXT

Barring a collapse from North Oconee (19-6, 10-2 Region 8-4A) they will be the Panthers’ first-round matchup. The last time these two teams played was in the 2024 quarterfinals, a sweep for the Titans who lost to Starr’s Mill in the semifinals.

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HOUSTON HOME JOURNAL

Northside completes foundational season, looks to keep building baseball program

By **CLAY BROWN**
HHJ Sports Editor
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WARNER ROBINS — With Wednesday's 11-4 win over Hawkinsville, Northside finished a baseball season with a .500 record for the first time since 2012.

This milestone caps a season that saw the Eagles accomplish several more. They won their first region game since 2019 (the last year they finished with double digit wins, too) and won multiple for the first time in 10 years.

Four seasons ago Joey Walker's team played 30 games and won three. The next year they played 25 and again won three. Last year they finished 6-22 and their sixth year without a region victory.

Many of the losses were not close, either. The team folded under pressure and was often out of games in the first few innings. They were disregarded by the Houston County baseball community.

But 2026 will go down as the year they started to turn heads.

"To go from three [wins], to six, to nine to now 15, just to hang with it through the early [seasons]...it was hard," Walker said. "As an adult with mature emotions it was hard, so I can't even imagine the immature [emotions of a teenager]. We've got some seniors that didn't make it all four years because it was too hard."

Walker's expectations for his players have steadily increased. Emerson Rugama, Taylor Hall, Caden Nelson and Daniel

Valdes are some of the best the program has produced so far. The 2026 class is the first group of seniors that he's had from the beginning.

"We demanded more and more every year to try to close the gap. I pray that they see...hard work is rewarded," he continued. "For them to see that and for them to be able to claim that they laid the foundation for moving forward, that hopefully it's a cultural shift. Hopefully people will look back on this year [and say]...they changed the Northside program and the trajectory of it. Because it could have easily headed the other way."

Progress is not often linear and Northside graduates eight seniors this year; that is not a small number.

That doesn't mean the program can't continue to move in a positive direction. With an uptick in young players comes more opportunity to grow and those coming in will have the benefit of a foundation already set.

They are still a long way from regularly competing in a tough Region 2-5A (2-6A next year) that will add Tift County for at least the next cycle.

"A lot of it is going to focus on the weight room and nutrition. At this point we got to start looking physically like some of the other teams in the region," Walker said on some next steps. "We are pretty small still, and we're going to be very, very young next year. We have one senior Jaxson Rowe coming back next year."

"We got a lot of fresh-

men coming in from eighth grade that are pretty solid at Thomson [Middle School] and Northside Middle, and so it's going to be getting them bought into the weight room and getting them bought into the culture," Walker continued.

There are several players to be excited about already on the roster, too.

Freshman Jeremy Snelling is towards the top of the list. He's developing into a lethal leadoff hitter and had a great end to the season.

"Got a real special freshman, Jeremy Snelling. He has probably said six words all year long and he's going to have to own some stuff and step up into a leadership role, and we're going to press him into that," Walker said. "Jacob Canceran [is] another freshman...then Tucker Stillwell...he's a 10th-grader. [We're going to] lean on those three as [the] tone setters and see if we can't build on this."

Even this season you could see the effects of relying on younger or inexperienced players. While the four primary seniors (Rugama, Hall, Nelson and Valdes) produced consistently, one of the Eagles' weaknesses was finding similar output elsewhere.

Walker won't be surprised if the numbers look worse next year. However, the Northside alum is not too concerned with on-paper numbers.

"Even if the record doesn't look quite the same, if the program can continue to improve and what the product looks like [that will be progress]," Walker continued. "The region gets tough-



Northside senior Emerson Rugama pitched his last game for the Eagles, an 11-4 victory against Hawkinsville.

er bringing Tift [County] back into the region. [Post Season Ranking] becomes a thing, so we're actually going to probably try to schedule a little harder to help our PSR to try and sneak into the back end of the playoffs."

Specifically with Rugama and Hall graduating, developing pitchers will be a big focus for the Eagles in the next few years.

Consistent pitching separates the teams at the bottom of the standings to those at the top. Houston County, a well-established program with a wealth of talented pitchers year after year, is proof of that.

Walker acknowledged the

fact that his budding program is not pulling from the same pool the Bears are and that they can't rely on gifts alone.

"It'll start with throwing programs in the summer, trying to get them up to speed," Walker said on the first steps to in-house development. "We don't have guys that are going to be throwing 90 and can live on strikeouts, and we know that, so they've got to be able to hit spots."

"We'll start doing competition bullpens, where if you don't hit a certain number you've got to run or you've got to do burpees or whatever," he explained. "Just to challenge them to

make it difficult, because just throwing into the nine square over and over is like hitting off a tee...When you step up to the mound and you've got a guy across you who's hitting .500 in the region and tearing the cover off the ball you still got to get it to the catcher. So it's really just trying to get them to grow up and get a competitive mentality."

Outside eyes might look on this season and shrug their shoulders. No playoff appearance, 2-13 in the region. But for those in tune with the Northside baseball program, they know that big things are on the horizon.

Veterans' Harris brings go-ahead run to complete comeback

By **CLAY BROWN**
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KATHLEEN — With the postseason starting next week, the comeback and clutch time experience Veterans got on Tuesday is invaluable.

The Warhawks (13-13) beat Tift County (11-16) 11-8 in a come-from-behind victory that featured an inexperienced pitching staff and a slow offensive start against a good hitting team in the Blue Devils.

Veterans will enter next week's GHSA state tournament as a four seed, meaning they'll face one of the state's region champions on the road. Learning how to come back and hold a lead is a big deal for head coach Jeff Sans' club.

"I think it's huge. Last week we lost two games, one in the eighth [inning] and one in the seventh [inning]. I think we've lost three or four like that in the region," Sans said. "We're just having a hard time holding on to leads late. Part of that's youth, part of that's not developing the right habits. But just to be able to do that tonight I think's big for their confidence."

In the first inning Tift County took freshman Bentley Haines for a double and home run, and they did it again in the third inning to take a 5-2 lead.

The 'Hawks didn't generate any response through the

first three innings with most of their at-bats ending with a fly out. Even the first two outs of the fourth, their most productive offensive inning, were in the air.

"I think in the third and the fourth we made zero adjustments," Sans said. "The guy was a soft lefty and we were out front on everything, and that's what we challenged them with. This is an opportunity to learn how to make adjustments in game, and they did in the fifth and sixth. [They] started hitting more gap to gap type stuff, barreling some up."

A switch flipped when Kason Flowers took to the plate with two outs. He took strike one swinging and whiffed on a changeup for strike two, but the next changeup he sent flying up the middle to deal the first blow to the Blue Devils' five-run lead.

From that point on the 'Hawks started putting balls on the ground, or at least low enough in the air to avoid the outfield's gloves.

Steven Hafeychuck (along with some errors by the defense) dealt the most damage with a single to left field. An errant throw from the catcher back to third base scored three runs, including Hafeychuck.

Ethan Scott completed the cycle with a ground ball to right field to knot the game at seven.

The Blue Devils' leadoff in

the sixth inning walked and scored two at-bats later but Dillon Harris' single in the bottom reclaimed Veterans' lead for good.

The 'Hawks put three pitchers on the mound who had maybe a handful of innings of varsity experience. Haines and juniors Allen Slocum and Jackson Eaton.

Haines pitched for 3.1 innings, and 71% of his pitches were strikes, but Tift County had seen him too many times by that point.

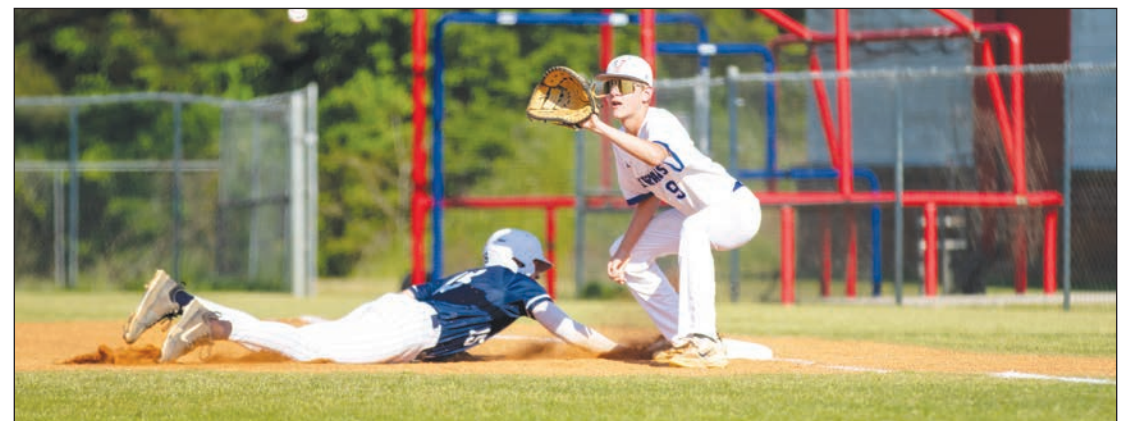
So in came Slocum who walked his first two batters and earned a mound visit from Sans.

"I just wanted to know what he felt comfortable with," Sans said on the conversation. "Usually when they say 'I feel comfortable with this pitch and this pitch,' it puts them in their head, I can throw these two."

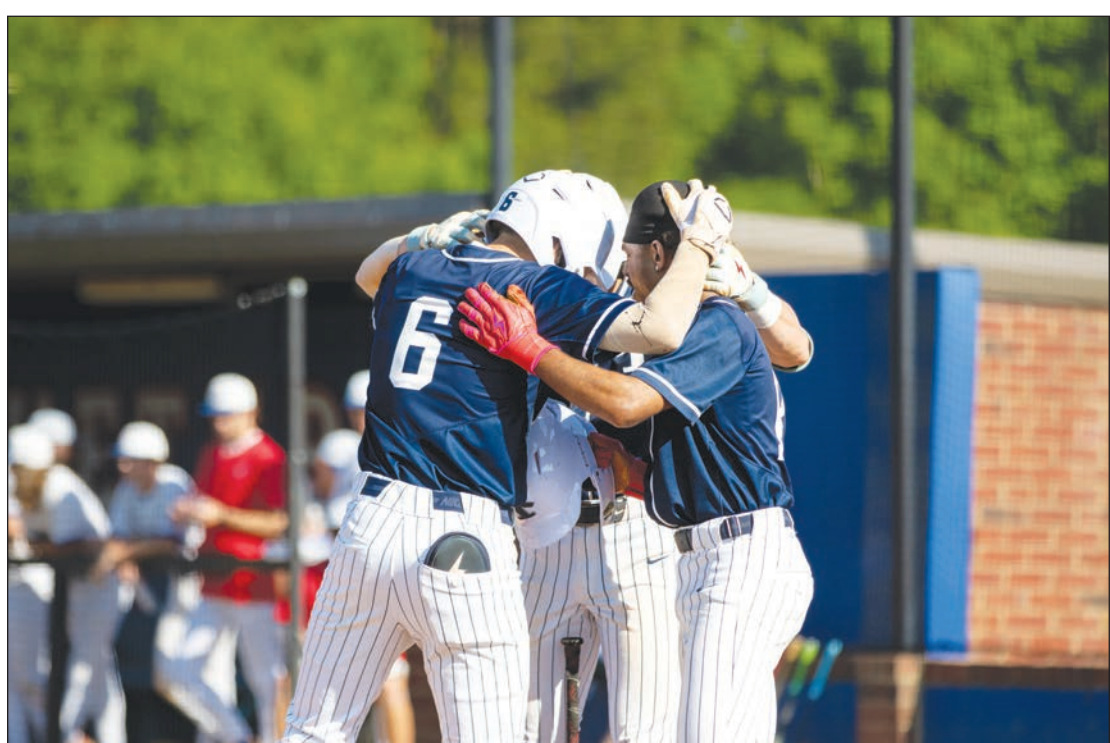
Two fly balls did score two runs after that, but Slocum looked more comfortable and was able to get through 2.1 innings before Eaton came in to close.

Eaton got the last out of the sixth and went three-up-three-down with two strikeouts in the seventh to finish the game.


"I thought they did a good job. Tift County can hit," Sans said of the trio. "They need to spot up their pitches a little bit better, but they were around the zone and did a good job, and that's what we asked for."



Veterans first baseman Dillon Harris (9) holds his glove out for a pickoff attempt as a Tift County runner dives back to the bag.




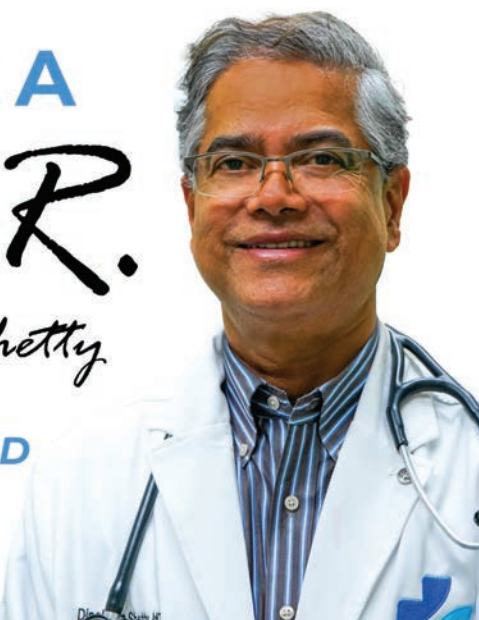
Three Blue Devils gather around home plate to celebrate Jake Spurlin's first-inning home run against Veterans.



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