

The Houston Home Journal

Houston County's most trusted news source since 1870 • EDIMGIAFAD

\$1.00 • Volume 156, No. 55

hhjonline.com

Weekend, June 27, 2026

Where confidence fits

Society31, a plus-size boutique, opening in Warner Robins



Allison Faik at the storefront for Society31, a new plus-size boutique opening in Warner Robins.

Brianna Smith/HHJ

By **BRIANNA SMITH**
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WARNER ROBINS — After one too many shopping trips that ended in frustration, Allison Faik decided Warner Robins needed something she couldn't find: a boutique where plus-size women aren't limited to a single rack tucked away in the corner.

On June 26, that vision becomes reality when Society31 opens its doors on Margie Drive, offering fashionable clothing and a shopping experience designed specifically with curvy women in mind.

Society31 opened on Friday with a ribbon-cutting at 11 a.m. The festivities continued through the weekend with sip-and-shop days on Friday and Saturday, featuring custom drinks from Sip Peazy.

Faik, the store's owner, was excited for opening day and hopes for a fun day of shopping.

What to expect at Society31

Inside the store, most clothing items range from large to 4XL, and, if Faik can find them, in 5XL.

They clearly mark pieces that run smaller than typical sizing, giving shoppers the clue to choose the next size up for a perfect fit.

The boutique also offers accessories and handbags for shoppers of all sizes.

Faik aims for an affordable price range similar to Target. The most expensive pieces are \$60. Comparable pieces from plus-size retailers like Torrid and Lane Bryant are often higher at full price, like dresses priced up to \$100 and \$130, respectively.

The overall catalog aligns with the recent trend of dopamine dressing. The style rose to prominence after the COVID-19 pandemic and uses color and symbolism to instill joy in the wearer, according to fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar.

See **BOUTIQUE** page 2A

New downtown manager Jara Hurt aims to keep the door open

By **SANDRA HERNANDEZ**
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PERRY — Jara Hurt has been a key player in the Perry Area Chamber of Commerce. Now, she is bringing her expertise to the city level by stepping into her new role as downtown manager.

Hurt lives and works in the heart of downtown Perry. She was previously the operations director at the Chamber of Commerce for two years.

Hurt started her role on

June 10, but has already made valuable connections. As downtown manager, Hurt serves as the connector between businesses, residents, and the city. She is the liaison for the downtown merchants.

According to the city, there are about 250 businesses downtown.

In her role, she will support economic growth, enhance downtown experiences and bring in projects and initiatives that will make downtown thrive. She aims to make it a place where people can live, work

and visit.

Hurt also works directly with the Main Street Advisory Board, an organization of community partners dedicated to downtown revitalization.

Transitioning from the chamber to the city has been smooth, Hurt said in an interview. She stepped into the role with a unique advantage since she was already working in Perry.

Hurt has already known her community and built relationships with downtown merchants.

See **MANAGER** page 3A



Hurt

Perry Surcheros offers free food to first 50 guests at grand opening on Tuesday

By **OWEN JONES**
HHJ Staff Writer
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PERRY — Mandy Eakin and her son were first in line outside of the new Surcheros for the grand opening on Tuesday, and they'd been waiting since 7 p.m. Monday night.

Staying overnight to wait for a restaurant opening must have a good reason, and the newest Surcheros location did. The company gave the first 50 guests at the new Perry location free entrees, such as a burrito, burrito bowl, nachos or tacos. The promotion can be used once a week for a year.

See **FOOD** page 3A



Owen Jones/HHJ

Many were waiting outside of the new Surcheros location in Perry for an opportunity to get free Surcheros for a year.

In this month's edition of This is Robins...



U.S. Air Force Photo by Kisha Foster Johnson

Robins Air Force Base is providing a way for students interested in STEM to gain real-world experience, make connections and contribute to the base's overall mission. See more about their summer internship programs in this month's edition of This is Robins.



PERIODICAL

Word of the Day

She is clothed with strength and dignity; she can laugh at the days to come

— Proverbs 31:25 (NIV)

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A division of The Georgia Trust for Local News

STATE UPDATES

Lawmakers go home with more campaign fodder, few results

By **TYTAGAMI**
Bureau Chief

Capitol Beat News Service

The 2026 special session of the Georgia General Assembly may be remembered more for what did not happen than for what did.

Gov. Brian Kemp called lawmakers back to the Capitol mainly to complete work they had left unfinished during their regular session last winter and spring.

They had failed to address a looming deadline of their own making: had they gone home Tuesday without addressing their own July 1 prohibition on the use of QR codes in the state's voting machines, pandemonium would have reigned in the November mid-term elections.

Georgia would have been left with no legal method for tallying votes, other than the paper ballots intended for sporadic emergencies, such as power outages.

On Tuesday, lawmakers, after creating that deadline two years ago, managed to push it back by nearly two more years.

They also checked another item off Kemp's to-do list, retroactively approving his second gas tax suspension of the year. Kemp ordered the first one in March after

lawmakers, still in session, authorized it.

But they had already gavelled out of their regular session when he declared a state of emergency to extend the suspension into June.

So the Legislature retroactively approved that second suspension on Tuesday.

They did not pass any other major policy, although they may have gathered more fodder to present to voters as they campaign ahead of November.

About an hour before the special session started last week, Republican leaders from the House and Senate announced that they would not pursue a big and controversial item: redistricting.

Kemp had put that on their agenda after the U.S. Supreme Court issued a ruling in April that weakened the 1965 Voting Rights Act's protections against maps that dilute minority voting strength.

The proposal had already created an outcry among Democrats and civil rights groups, leading GOP lawmakers to consider the potential downsides of fueling opposition rage and Democratic turnout during the midterms.

No new sales tax
Republicans also failed to win Democratic support for

Kemp's call to consider putting a new 1% sales tax on local ballots. The referendums would have generated hundreds of millions of dollars to reduce homeowner property tax bills.

The scores of nearly identical local measures were introduced mostly by Republicans, one per city or county. They required a two-thirds vote for passage, and it became clear after the first votes last week that Democrats would oppose all of them.

Even so, after a string of defeats, Republicans kept calling up more of those bills. In the House, Rep. Chuck Efstrotation, R-Mulberry, moved to reconsider each of them twice, the maximum allowed.

Each vote went down more or less the same way, prompting Rep. Ruwa Romman, D-Duluth, to quip, with a chuckle, that "the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again expecting different results."

Democrats said they opposed the measures because they would have increased the cost of groceries and other daily necessities, with the revenue going to people fortunate enough to own a home.

They called it a tax increase. Republicans supported the

measures, saying that rising property taxes had made homeownership unaffordable for many.

Brookhaven, a city in metro Atlanta, had just raised its property tax rate 40%, noted Rep. Scott Hilton, R-Peachtree Corners. "By voting red, you are suppressing voters' cherished right to vote on property tax relief," he said.

By invoking that color, Hilton meant the "no" button on lawmakers' desks, not the color associated with his political party.

But red incumbent lawmakers will likely be using the blue 'no' votes against the tax swap during their political campaigns this year.

The strategy prompted a rebuke from Rep. Angela Moore, D-Stonecrest, who complained about the cost to taxpayers of the special session.

That money would have been better spent on a state down payment assistance program, she said, "instead of wasting our time on trying to tax our constituents."

No veto override

Yet Democrats engaged in political sport, too, calling for a vote on a matter Republicans managed to evade. GOP lawmakers in the House wanted nothing to

do with a Democrat's call to override a veto by Kemp.

During their regular session, House Bill 1192 had been a bipartisan measure, with both Efstrotation, the majority leader, and Rep. Carolyn Hugley, D-Columbus, the minority leader, among the top co-sponsors.

It had passed the House and Senate unanimously, driven by frustration over funding shortfalls at the Georgia Departments of Human Services and Community Health.

It mandated stricter accounting practices and annual reporting to the General Assembly, and it prohibited commingling of funds from different sources.

Kemp vetoed HB 1192, writing that it violated the separation of powers.

On Monday, Rep. Stacey Evans, D-Atlanta, moved to override the veto. But House Speaker Jon Burns, R-Newington, with the help of a Kemp ally on the House floor, used parliamentary procedure to table the motion.

Thus, Republicans avoided a difficult vote that would either have pitted them against their GOP governor or caused them to flip their position.

Later that evening, during their customary time for

announcements, Evans got around the rules that limit debate by announcing that it was the anniversary of Congress' adoption of the Pledge of Allegiance during World War II.

"And when we table motions instead of taking up issues, when we sit on our rights," she said, "we are really spitting in the face of so many that came before us to stand for our flag."

Meeting with reporters after the motion to table, Evans was less diplomatic, calling Republicans "spineless" for avoiding the veto vote, and saying it exemplified why voters should give Democrats a majority in the House.

The next day, the Senate unanimously approved the gas tax suspension that the House had unanimously approved on Saturday, and Republicans in both chambers voted to delay the QR code ban, mostly along party lines.

Then, they went home.
This article is available through a partnership with Capitol Beat News Service, a project of the Georgia Press Association's non-profit, tax-exempt Educational Foundation.

BOUTIQUE

From page 1A

Faik chooses clothing that is flattering in terms of fabric, fit and patterns.

"It's stuff that I would wear that I think will make people feel good and look good," she said.

Clothes are sorted into four categories tailored to different age ranges:

- Elevated Everyday - casual and youthful leaning for young adults

- Polished and Put Together - business casual and work-wear for adults

- Timeless Confidence - mature and modest styles for middle-aged and older adults

- Core Collection - elevated basics for all ages

The categories aren't hard-and-fast rules. Faik encourages finding pieces from every section.

"I still want people to feel comfortable interchanging. Just because you're a certain age doesn't mean you're that age at heart," she said.

The store also features a rotating capsule collection for special occasions. First up is Fourth of July, then next is teacher-themed for back-to-school.

Faik is also planning a gameday collection, with straight sizes included, so friend groups can wear matching outfits for games.

Faik is hoping for more than a store. She wants an experience. The goal is happiness as shoppers browse through the racks with colorful decorations surrounding them. Music is selected for a laid-back atmosphere, with Fleetwood Mac playing softly over the speakers during The Journal's visit.

Society31's name comes from the Bible, specifically Proverbs 31, Faik said. The chapter describes a virtuous woman, and Faik believes she is meant to help women feel seen and loved through fashion.

"I felt so strongly like it was my calling. All of my experiences culminated into this one project that was meant for me to do," she said.

Two years ago, Faik moved to Warner Robins from Wrightsville, a small town near Dublin. She and her friend were shopping for a wedding guest dress in town and couldn't find suitable options in her size. She start-

ed talking to other plus-size women while out shopping and noticed that many struggled with the same thing.

With prior retail experience and a master's degree in Information Technology, Faik chose to apply her insights and begin work on opening Society31 in May of this year. She aims for it to be an in-person, fully size-inclusive option that fills a gap.

"I wanted to create something where, as a plus-size woman, I could walk into a store and know that I didn't have to go to one little rack in the back corner," Faik said.

The market intelligence platform PipeCandy estimates that only 8% of online clothing retailers offer plus sizes, and Faik faced similar challenges buying clothing for the boutique.

Recently, Faik visited the AmericasMart wholesale market in Atlanta to buy clothing. The retailer operates 299 clothing stores, with eight offering plus sizes. Only three offered sizes larger than 2XL.

Because of the challenges she faced while shopping, Faik wants her boutique to be a safe space for plus-size women, offering fashionable, trendy options.

"People want real clothes," she said. "They want the same clothes, just in a larger size."

Faik hopes the boutique will grow into a vibrant community hub with a loyal cus-

tomer base.

Faik's friend and assistant, Nancy Beasley, agreed, saying she wants to see a place where women empower other women.

"Women need to lift each other up. I see people out all the time and complement them on their hair and clothes. No matter how big or small you are, give somebody a compliment," Beasley said.

In the future, Faik will work hand in hand with a fashion designer for next year's spring collection. The designer reached out to her after she advocated for more plus-size options at AmericasMart.

Faik eventually wants to expand to a mobile boutique or a second location.

She also wants to design her own clothing line. And the name for it?

"Society31, of course," she said.

The store offers online shopping with pickup sites in Warner Robins and Dublin at society31.com.

Society31 will be open Monday through Saturday from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m., and will be located at 115 Margie Drive, Suite G, Warner Robins.

Having a fashion emergency outside of business hours? Faik said she will meet you at the store to sort it out.

For fashion emergencies, call (478) 538-5715.



Brieanna Smith/HMJ

The Core Collection is a selection of elevated basics at Society31.

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- Souvenir Print Editions

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CALENDAR

Wellston Winds 250th Celebration Concert

June 28 | 3 p.m.
1942 Heritage Blvd, Warner Robins

Join the Wellston Winds for our annual Patriotic Concert at the Museum of Aviation's Centruy of Flight Hangar as we celebrate 250 years of American independence.

Experience an afternoon of inspiring music, patriotic favorites, and community celebration as we honor our nation's rich history and heritage.

The concert is free to attend. Gather your family and friends and make plans to celebrate America's 250th with us. We can't wait to see you there!

HHJ 250th Celebration Pop-Up

July 2 | 11 a.m. - 2 p.m.
1210 Washington Street, Perry

Perry, let's celebrate 250 years of America together!

Make us your lunchtime stop on Thursday, July 2, for the Houston Home Journal's 250 Celebration Pop-Up at our office, 1210 Washington Street in Perry!

From 11 a.m. to 2 p.m., we'll be serving up (while supplies last):

- Freshly grilled hot dogs
- Ice-cold sweet tea and water

- FREE limited-edition 250th anniversary T-shirts
- Souvenir print editions fresh off the press

- And 50% OFF a print & digital subscription offer

Whether you're a long-time reader or just want to grab a hot dog and some patriotic swag, we'd love to see you there.

Come hungry, leave with history.

Taylor County Holiness Camp Meeting

July 2-10
473 LT Peed Road, Butler

Rev. Wayne Bosworth

invites you to attend our 87th year of old fashioned camp meeting days, July 2-10, 2026.

Preaching, Bible study, youth & children services are held daily at 9:30 am, 11:00 am & 7:00 pm. A nursery is provided for children 4 years old and under for the 11:00 am & 7:00 pm services. Supervised recreation & crafts are available in the mornings & afternoons for the children & youth.

Air conditioned motel rooms, dorm accommodations & RV hook-ups are available.

For lodging accommodations contact Rebecca Wade at rebecawade81@gmail.com or call her at (602) 373-6145.

Wonderful southern style meals are prepared daily at reasonable prices in the air-conditioned cafeteria at 8 am, 12:15 & 5:00 pm.

Monday, July 6, is Missionary Day, featuring missionaries from World Gospel Mission and Dr.

Michel Khalil, President of Step Forward Ministries. Evangelist & Bible Teacher: Dr. Joe Harmon & Rev. Cory Clark
Worship Leader: Tab Beechler
Youth Director: Andrew Newberry
Co-Directors of Children's Ministry: Kiley Bosworth & Jenny Barbee
Look up taylorcountycamp.org on the web for more information.

Statewide Bible Reading

July 14 | 7 a.m.
201 North Perry Parkway, Perry

Join us for the 8th annual "7/14 Georgia Statewide Bible Reading" on July 14.

All 159 counties in Georgia will have volunteers read an assigned portion of Scripture beginning simultaneously at 7:14 a.m., resulting in the entire Bible being read and released over the state.

The name is taken from II Chronicles 7:14. "If My

people who are called by My name humble themselves and pray, and seek My face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

This public reading of the entire Word of God is held each July 14 at the County Courthouse in the city of the County Seat of Government. Residents are encouraged to attend and volunteer to read a portion of Scripture. All ages welcome.

Stars, Stripes, & Stories

July 1 | 4 p.m. - 7 p.m.
900 N. Houston Road, Warner Robins

The City of Warner Robins invites the community to celebrate the spirit of reading and patriotism during "Stars, Stripes, & Stories," a special Georgia Reads event commemorating America's 250th anniversary. The event will take place on Wednesday, July 1, 2026, at the InnoLab located at

the North Houston Road Sports Complex and will offer families an opportunity to enjoy books, creativity, and community together.

As part of the celebration, Mayor LaRhonda W. Patrick will host a special patriotic-themed book reading for children and families. Attendees will also have the opportunity to capture memories at a patriotic photo booth and participate in several interactive activities, including:

- Bookmark-making station
- Patriotic coloring sheet design activity
- Family-friendly crafts and activities

"Stars, Stripes, & Stories" is part of Georgia Reads and the nationwide commemoration of America 250, celebrating the power of literacy, civic engagement, and the shared stories that unite communities across generations.

Families of all ages are encouraged to attend and join in this festive celebration of reading and America's rich history.

Feds bust ring that allegedly flew drugs, weapons into prisons

By **TYTAGAMI**
Bureau Chief

Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — They were allegedly flying to help prisoners get high and to maybe escape, but now nine people, all but one from Macon, are behind bars themselves after federal agents arrested them in connection with delivering drugs, phones and weapons into prisons from above.

The bust, announced Wednesday, involved a "vast alleged conspiracy using drones to smuggle contraband," according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

The nine suspects and three inmates are accused of coordinating deliveries of methamphetamine, marijuana and other controlled substances, as well as cell phones, tobacco and objects such as saw blades to be used as weapons for escape.

The eight of the accused who are from Macon are Leviticus Blash, 42; Chrystal Dunn, 37; Ira Christopher Jackson, 42; Xavier Maxwell, 30; Kenna Middleton, 45; Glenn Middleton, 70; Jeff Richardson, 23, and Tysean Richardson, 23.

The accusations were in an indictment unsealed Wednesday that described drone deliveries to 10 prisons

in eight states, including two in Georgia, in Atlanta and in Jessup.

The joint announcement by the federal government included U.S. Attorney William R. "Will" Keyes for the Middle District of Georgia and William K. Marshall III, director of the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

Drones have been an ongoing problem for Georgia prisons.

During a legislative hearing at the Atlanta Capitol in December, Matthew Wolfe from the Georgia Department of Corrections said that for the year through June 2025 there were 120 inmates charged and 362 civilians arrested in connection with contraband deliveries.

The schemes sometimes involved simple methods, such as wrapping contraband with duct tape into the shape of a football and tossing it over a prison fence. But they often involved drones, said Wolfe, who displayed a photo of a confiscated unmanned aircraft that could carry hundreds of pounds.

"Civilian involvement remains the most common threat vector, with throwovers and drone drops continuing to be the primary method used to infiltrate our

institutions," Wolfe said.

Corrections Commissioner Tyrone Oliver said technology existed to stop such drones.

"We just don't have the authority, the legal authority, to be able to do it," Oliver told lawmakers.

The General Assembly responded by passing House Bill 1230, which takes effect Wednesday.

The new law will make it illegal to fly a drone over a prison. It will also authorize law enforcement agencies and officers who suspect drone use for criminal intent to detect, track and identify the aircraft and then intercept and disable them with jamming, hacking or other methods.

That law is for state and local authorities.

The indictment unsealed Wednesday involved a take-down by the federal government using sophisticated tracking technology.

The federal Bureau of Prisons used a drone detection system that provided alerts when drones were nearby and that reported an aircraft's make, model and identification number, along with the launch location, flight path and altitude.

MANAGER

From page 1A

"This role allows me to do what I love doing, which is pour into this community and into the people that are here just from a bigger, broader perspective," she said.

Being downtown manager will give Hurt greater reach, but it also overlaps with her previous role as operations director, which is a benefit for her.

Both have the same skill set, centered on people and places. As operations director, she oversaw daily operations and coordinated community and business events. She also worked closely with local business owners, community organizations, volunteers and civic leaders to strengthen economic vitality and community connections.

In her new role, she can focus on economic development, relationship-building, and community engagement.

"I get to take what I already had and just plug it into bigger areas [to] make big tangible differences in people's everyday lives," she said.

Hurt is watching for future downtown development. Receiving input from that is important, especially with the city's ongoing growth.

She aims to balance growth with maintaining the small-town feel Perry is known for.

"I want to make sure that we're building on momentum that's already there, but keeping this small, historic, beautiful [and] family-friendly downtown that we have that draws people here in the first place," she said.

Hurt wants an open-door policy with downtown merchants. She encourages business owners to share their feedback and develop solutions.

"They can always bring that to me. I'm here and I'll listen [to the] good, the bad and the ugly. We can't fix what we don't know is broken," she said. "I want them to always feel like they can talk to me to tell me what it is. If I don't know the answer, we will find it together, because at the end of the day we all want what's best for Perry."

She said the city is made up of passionate business owners, residents and community leaders. Hurt cares deeply about downtown and wants to learn from the people who make it unique.

"I believe the best ideas come from conversations and collaboration. These first six months to a year, I really want to be focused on building those relationships and understanding more in-depth what our downtown needs," she said.

Hurt hopes those conversations will lead to opportunities to make meaningful improvements, whether by supporting businesses or by enhancing events and established unification efforts.

She mentions the city's Placemaking Committee, who are also responsible for enhancing the downtown experience. Hurt aims to continue supporting the committee in every way possible.

Being part of the city has been great for Hurt. She said everyone has been welcoming, which has made her even

more excited for her role. She looks forward to working hand in hand with the city for its betterment and growth.

Hurt's overall goal is to ensure downtown Perry remains vibrant and welcoming for visitors and residents. She also wants it to be a place where businesses can thrive.

"That's the goal [to] keep it this beautiful, historical little city that it is but also grow in a way that's attainable and still feels like small town Perry," she said.

In an interview, the City of Perry's Communications Director, Tabitha Clark, said Hurt has been a joy to work with so far. She mentioned Hurt's experience and background with downtown businesses, given her previous position at the chamber of commerce.

Clark said Hurt is the perfect fit since she already has the trust and respect from downtown merchants. The city expects her to be a great downtown manager. Hurt, being a downtown resident, also played a role in her hiring.

"She brings a very unique perspective of both the outsider and insider. That is something we really valued in her application and in her interview," Clark said.

Hurt has already started implementing ideas and asking questions about future projects. Clark said she is a great asset to the team and has fit in well with city staff.

"She is hitting the ground running and we're super excited to see everything that she accomplishes," Clark said.

FOOD

From page 1A

The line outside wrapped around the building on Houston Lake Road.

Others vying for free food came hours later. She said those next in line arrived in an RV that had been in the parking lot all night.

Eiken has two kids and a husband and said the free food will be shared with her family. Her son wanted to camp out as some people do on Black Friday.

"Because we live so close, we drove by a few times to see if anybody was coming and said 'we'll just make a night of it,'" Eakin said in an interview. "I'm a teacher, and I have nothing else to do this summer, but for [free food] it's worth it."

Surcheros originated in Douglas, Georgia, and is now headquartered in Alpharetta. The Tex-Mex spot also has

locations in Florida, South Carolina and Tennessee.

The new Surcheros is the 37th location in Georgia and the second in Houston County. The other location is at 1277 South Houston Lake Road in Warner Robins.

Franchisee and entrepreneur Kyle Cullars is excited to bring the brand to Perry. He also owns the other location on South Houston Lake Road.

"I think [Perry] is the perfect combination of a nice and friendly southern town that is also developing and growing in all the right ways," Cullars said in an interview.

Cullars said the free entrees for a year promotion is great to have for a grand opening.

"It really drums up a lot of excitement for your opening, and every store that we've opened we've had lots of people already there camping out overnight."

Cullars said their goal is to provide an escape from the


worries of day-to-day life and to make Surcheros a place to relax and enjoy good food.

"You never know the weight people are carrying around, and we just want to make sure to serve everybody that maybe lightens their load," he said.

The new Surcheros is located at 1818 Houston Lake Road in Perry. The restaurant is open every day from 10:30 a.m. to 9 p.m.

See the menu at www.surcheros.com.

View the classifieds on our website at www.hjonline.com



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Your donation helps fund the search for missing children and preventing abduction. Accepting Cars, Trucks and Vans. Fast Free Pickup - Running or Not May Qualify for Tax Deduction - Call (888) 515-3813.</p> <p>TV/INTERNET</p> <p>Get DISH Satellite TV + Internet! Free Install. Free HD-DVR Upgrade, 80,000 On-Demand Movies, Plus Limited Time Up To \$600 In Gift Cards. Call Today! 1-866-369-1468</p> <p>COMPUTER ISSUES? FREE DIAGNOSIS by GEEKS ON SITE! Virus Removal, Data Recovery! 24/7 EMERGENCY \$20 OFF ANY SERVICE with coupon 42522! Restrictions apply. 844-739-4842</p> <p>WANTED</p> <p>We Buy Houses for Cash AS IS! No repairs. No fuss. Any condition. Easy three step process. Call, get cash offer and get paid. Get your fair cash offer today by calling Liz Buys Houses: 1-877-399-2113</p> <p>TOP CASH PAID FOR OLD GUITARS! 1920-1980 Gibson, Martin, Fender, Gretsch, Epiphone, Guild, Mosrite, Rickenbacker, Prairie State, D'Angelico, Stromberg, And Gibson Mandolins / Banjos. 1-877-515-0329</p>
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VIEWPOINTS

The Houston Home Journal

See us online at
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A division of the Georgia Trust for Local News

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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.

The Houston Home Journal is a periodical, mailed (ISSN 471) in Perry and is published Wednesday and Saturday by Houston Home Journal P.O. Box 1910, Perry, GA 31069; 478-987-1823
POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: P.O. Box 1910, Perry, GA 31069.

Subscription Rates:
In county - \$88
Senior Citizen (60) - \$78
Out of County or State - \$98
Online Access only - \$58

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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

Fireworks season is here: A public service announcement

NEW
SOUTHERN DAD

KYLE DOMINY



During last year's Fourth of July celebrations more than 13,000 Americans reported to emergency rooms across the country due to fireworks-related injuries. According to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission, that number was down from over 14,700 in 2024.

How many people lost fingers, or worse, in backyard explosions is unknown. I don't think there is a commission that keeps up with that. At least not publicly. You can assume around 1,700, if my math is correct.

With the United States' 250th birthday approaching, it's a safe bet that more people will be enjoying amateur pyrotechnics this year than in a long time. And why not? Few things celebrate freedom quite like turning your backyard into southern Lebanon with colorful blasts of gunpowder.

That's a topical geopolitical joke. Try to keep up.

I can remember when fireworks were illegal in Georgia. To get your hands on a Roman candle or a string of firecrackers you had to sneak them back from a family vacation or have a shady uncle who frequently visited the state line and came back with what were essentially little sticks of dynamite.

Now you can get them anywhere. I was buying a gallon of milk the other day and right next to the checkout line, adjacent to the candy, chewing gum and other impulse buys, was a display case full of colorfully packaged explosives.

We can thank the ancient Chinese for the invention of fireworks. Dating back to the Song Dynasty, firework technicians would pack gunpowder into bamboo tubes.

It was not long before they discovered that adding powdered chemicals would produce colorful blasts of light.

These pyrotechnicians of old were highly revered members of society. Their wares were sought-after commodities used in festivals and religious ceremonies. Now we've got Geech and Skeeter, not a full hand of digits or complete set of teeth between 'em, all rockets red glare at all hours of the night for any ol' excuse.

Don't get me wrong, I love fireworks and I think our Founding Fathers would want us to have access to them. Besides, fireworks were a part of the very first Independence Day celebration in 1777, one year after the first public reading of the Declaration of Independence. But like many things, excess has taken the magic out of fireworks.

Few large tourist attractions do not include a nightly fireworks display; most major sporting events have celebratory explosions. They are a common sighting from small towns to mega metropolitan areas. Fireworks displays are much like parades, if you have seen one, you've seen them all.

We don't shoot off many fireworks in my family these days. We have too many dogs, and most dogs come pre-installed with PTSD. Loud noises make them cower or act rashly, like they are having flashbacks from Nam.

If you're going to celebrate this Fourth of July with a personal fireworks extravaganza, please do so safely. Secure your pets, stop at a reasonable hour and keep some ice handy.

You know, for when you blow your finger off.

America is still beautiful

We aren't perfect. But we invented the Frisbee, the Slinky, Operation, the Pet Rock, and the Clapper. How bad can we be?

Beyond helping to save the world in World War II, we gave the world spray-on cheese, the Coney Island hot dog eating contest, turducken, deep-fried butter, and bacon everything. There may be things we should do better, but how do you improve on fried butter?

We are home to Jonas Salk, George Washington Carver, Ben Franklin, Thomas Edison, Vinton Cerf, and thousands more who made the world better through their inventions.

We invented the blues, jazz, rock 'n' roll, country, and disco. We had 500,000 hippies at Woodstock.

We landed on the moon, launched the Voyager probes, sent Mars rovers, and built Skylab. We even invented the microwave oven.

On the political front, we had Thomas Jefferson, John Adams, Abraham Lincoln, and Ronald Reagan—revolutionary visionaries, quite literally.

In the modern era, we invented the internet, GPS, the microprocessor, modern aviation, and mass production of automobiles.

In technology, American companies like Microsoft, Apple, NVIDIA, Tesla, CrowdStrike, and Google are global leaders.

And American education leads the world, with institutions like Georgia Tech, MIT, Harvard, and Stanford attracting students from everywhere for cutting-edge learning.

Healthcare is a challenge, especially in delivery and access, but places like Mayo Clinic, MD Anderson,

COLUMNIST

KELLY BURKE



Memorial Sloan Kettering, and Johns Hopkins make the U.S. a destination for world-class care.

I know I've left out something important, but you get the point. All of the liberty, innovation, and quality of life we've achieved in the

past 250 years is just a drop in the bucket compared to what we can accomplish in the next 250—if we pull together instead of apart.

Happy Birthday, America!

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.



The night Alan Jackson fried our fish

GUEST
COLUMNIST

JOHN TRUSSELL



In 1986, Dean Wohlgeomuth, several other writers and I got together at Highland Marina on West Point Lake for our annual Georgia Outdoor Writers Association conference.

We spent the morning fishing and later gathered in the meeting room while bass and crappie from that morning's trip were fried up for supper.

While we talked, we had side conversations with a young kid behind the counter, cooking fish. He was a nice, hard-working young man who could smile, talk and cook fish all at the same time. He was very friendly, and we talked about fishing the lake, the weather and whatever else came to mind.

The cook ate with us, and after the meeting we learned he was an aspiring songwriter and singer.

Later that evening, he played a few songs for our members. Then the evening faded into time.

Several years later, one of our members said, "You know, that young man who cooked our fish and sang songs for us at Highland Marina was the one and only Alan Jackson!" Imagine my surprise.

Back then, the Georgia Outdoor Writers Association was filled with legendary outdoor communicators and storytellers. Writers like Dean Wohlgeomuth, Russ Daily, Wally Walworth, Charlie Elliott, Everett Beal, Bill

Partridge and Ridley Bell helped hold the organization together and carried the torch for outdoor writing in Georgia for many years.

Dean Wohlgeomuth was especially important to me. Growing up in rural Houston County, I learned how to hunt and fish by trial and error while spending nearly every day outdoors when I wasn't in school. We lived next to woodlands and a small stream full of fish, and I spent my younger years fishing and hunting, building rafts and small log cabins while learning lessons from the great outdoors. I also learned a lot about fishing from my dad, Grady Rufus Trussell, who was a field electric engineer for Flint Energies.

After saving money from cutting grass and collecting Coke bottles, I bought a \$2 subscription to Georgia Game & Fish magazine. I knew what day the magazine would arrive in the mailbox, and I was usually there waiting on it so I could read stories from Dean Wohlgeomuth, Aaron Pass and Marvin Tye.

I thought Dean had the

coolest job in the world.

Years later, Dean and I crossed paths at a Georgia Outdoor Writers Association meeting and we became instant buddies after I told him I had grown up on a steady diet of his stories.

By the time that Highland Marina conference rolled around in 1986, I had started writing my own outdoors column for the Warner Robins Daily Sun newspaper. At the conference that year, Dean Wohlgeomuth, serving as president of the Georgia Outdoor Writers Association, recognized Congressman Lindsey Thomas as Conservationist of the Year.

Over the years, I have followed Alan Jackson's career and songs very closely. It would be hard to pick a favorite, but songs like "Home," "Remember When," "Drive" and "Here In The Real World" have always stood out to me because they remind people of family, small towns and where they came from. And how can you ever forget the poignant 911 song, "Where were you (when the world stopped turning)." Alan said that song

came to him late at night when he was lying in bed and was a gift from God.

One of my favorite Alan Jackson songs is "Drive," where he sings about his dad letting him drive the boat as a young boy. Anybody who grew up outdoors can probably understand that great feeling of accomplishment.

That old crowd of outdoor writers is mostly gone now, fishing happily in heaven somewhere, but the memories remain.

My favorite recent Alan Jackson song is "The Older I Get" which has personal meaning for Jackson and many of his fans, since he performs his last public concert, due to health issues, in Nashville on June 27. If you miss the concert, it will show on NBC later this year., so check it out. A few lines from that song are:

"The older I get, the more I think

You only get a minute, better live while you're in it

'Cause it's gone in a blink.

And the older I get, the truer it is

It's the people you love, not the money and stuff That makes you rich."

Time passes so quickly! And every time I hear an Alan Jackson song, I think about that night long ago at Highland Marina when none of realized that the young man cooking our fish would someday become a country music legend!

LIFESTYLE & FAITH

How beans can lower your cholesterol

Its active ingredient for this process is simply the large content of soluble fiber beans contain, and the process is the removal of bile through stool, which in turn causes our body to produce replacement bile and it makes this new bile from cholesterol. This simple food is also a great source of plant based protein!

The difference between soluble fiber and insoluble fiber is: soluble fiber is or becomes a jelly like substance and slows absorption of fats and sugars. Insoluble fiber stays fibrous and helps keep things moving through our digestive tract and helps keep old food debris from getting stuck in our colon walls.

How soluble fiber works: soluble fiber becomes a gel like product that slows down absorption of fats and sugars in our digestive track, (this is why sugar from fruits is absorbed more slowly than factory processed sugar products). Our gall bladder sprinkles bile over fatty foods we eat to help break fat. The soluble fiber makes so it's not as easy for our body to reabsorb the bile back up to the liver (from our digestive track) and then back out to the gall bladders storage tank. When we lose bile through our stool it forces the liver

YOUR HEALTH
WADE YODER



to have to make new bile salts and the main ingredient that our liver uses to form new bile salts is cholesterol.

If we can mix in more food's rich in soluble fiber (especially when eating fatty foods) and lower our intake of starches and sugars (other than the sugars from fruits) we should have an effective cholesterol lowering diet.

List of foods rich in soluble fiber: kidney beans, black beans, navy beans, oats, apples, bananas, prunes, citrus fruits, Brussels sprouts, green leafy vegetables, sweet potatoes. When in doubt, add in some BeneFiber or Metamucil with your meals. This is pretty much tasteless soluble fiber so it can be mixed into low fiber foods or water and is a good way to help increase our soluble fiber intake. Other good add-ins are: almonds, walnuts, pistachios, ground flaxseed, and Extra Virgin Olive Oil (for cardiovascular protection).

Benefits of a cholesterol lowering diet: helps control cholesterol, lower the risk of diabetes, high blood pressure, coronary artery disease, obesity, hemorrhoids, colon cancer, constipation and irritable bowel syndrome (IBS) etc., all without the side effects of statin drugs.

Statins are one of the most prescribed drug classes in history and can serve a useful purpose, but if we would look at statins and other awesome modern medicine as a temporary intervention instead of a long-term solution these medicines would serve their purpose much better.

In keeping with Hippocrates' famous saying, "Let thy food be thy medicine and let thy medicine be thy food" we need to increase our soluble fiber intake to help lower or keep our cholesterol in check or we will very possibly become a future statin drug customer.

The red line on righteousness

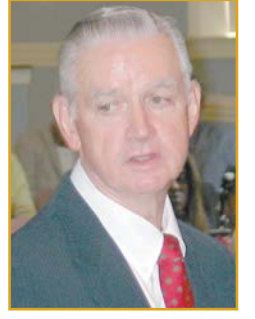
The Jewish law book, called the Mishnah, comprises 63 tractates of laws. It includes the 613 commandments of the Mosaic Law (found in first five books of Bible) plus hundreds of oral laws and statutes. Therein, it states that at the final judgment a man will be judged on the basis of the majority of his deeds.

This begs the question: how much righteousness is required for admission to heaven? In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus established a "red line" on how much sin was acceptable. He declared, "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:20).

The Scribes and Pharisees were the religious leaders of their day. They were so scrupulous in keeping God's commandments and living righteously that modern day Christians would have a difficult time emulating them, much less exceeding them.

Many Christians today aren't overly concerned about keeping God's commandments. They feel they are insulated from the penalty of sin because Christ's righteousness is imputed to them. They also believe any future sins they may commit will not be held against them—that they have blanket protection by virtue of their faith.

PARABLES TO PONDER
BILLY POWELL



Worst yet, some churchgoers make a show of righteousness on Sunday, but come Monday, they revert to their old sinful ways of mistreating, cheating, and deceiving people. Some are modern day Scrooges who work employees for the lowest possible wages and benefits while constantly pressuring their employees to perform at higher levels of efficiency. The love of God is not in their hearts.

Such people profess they have been converted, but not so, for "if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new." The "old things" passed away are pride, sinful habits, and the love of self which manifests itself through self-righteousness and self-promotion. "Old things" are replaced with a newborn soul which delights in the things of God and abhors the things of the world and the flesh.

There is a new love toward family and friends, a new compassion never before felt for enemies, and a new love for all mankind. The things once loved are now detested.

The sins once held onto are put away forever.

The motive under which the Scribes and Pharisees lived was the motive of the Law; their aim was to satisfy the demands of the Law. But the motive under which the "true" Christian lives is that of love. Love denotes respect and reverence for God, respect for parents, respect for life, respect for truth, respect for another person, and respect for oneself so the wrong desires will not master one's life—all of which are the fundamental principles behind the Ten Commandments.

Jesus issued the blueprint for exceeding the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength and love your neighbor as yourself."

He also issued a stern warning to those who fail to honor God and fellowman: "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only those who do the will of my Father who is in heaven."

My 'gran' son – a chip (shot) off the old block

I have a trans son. Now I have a "gran" son. That's him in the picture, Josh, second from left. Pig tails tied up with ribbons. Dress (light pink) with (dark) pink, blue and chocolate donuts. Handbag made out of woven straw. A scarf for whenever "granny" has to go out on rainy days.

Some dads would be ashamed. Some might disclaim a child who doesn't walk the straight and narrow. Not me. I'm too old. I've learned to embrace whatever changes this crazy life throws at you. In fact, I've decided to help him make the transition ...

"Happy birthday!"
"Thanks dad."
"Well. Open it up."
"That's a big box! What is it? A new toolbox for the back of my truck? A grill?"
"Oh you'll see. Rip that paper off there, let's go."
"Uh ... uh ... It's a walker?"

"Not just a walker. It's a Medline Steel Rollator Walker with a durable steel frame, easy-to-use brake handles, a 12x12" padded seat and backrest with convenient storage and six-inch wheels designed for smooth transportation on any terrain. You're welcome."

I'll teach him their language of love ...

"Back in my day."

"You go ahead. I'm just going to sit for a minute."

"Hold on, I think I have the exact change."

"Can I pay for this with a check?"

"Kids today."

I'll get him a pill box organizer for his meds. I'll take him to the senior center so he can play Bingo. I'll take him to church and introduce him to the senior ladies Sunday School class where he can learn about God ... and love ... and gossip ... and go over needlepoint and the most recent obituaries ... and gossip ...

HHJ PUBLISHER
DON MONCRIEF



Why he'll be the best gran ever by the time I'm finished with him.

Or maybe not.

Maybe I'll confess that he was actually in a golf tournament. The 14th Annual Jack Steele Memorial held at Creekside Golf and Country Club in Hiram and that the "dress up" was actually part of a Fairways For Warriors event to raise money for combat wounded veterans and their families. Www.fairwaysforwarriors.org; they provide everything from "gently used" golf equipment to instruction and outings to therapy for post-traumatic stress

disorders, anger management, marriage and financial counseling.

Maybe I'll disclose that. Maybe I'll even add my son and Greg Tallent, on his left, finished first in the third flight. (The other two are Mark Bolotte, far left, and Harold Simpson, far right. Not sure where they finished in the tournament.)

Maybe ... Perhaps. Nah. What's the fun in that?

"Hey son. Want to go to Goodwill? I saw a nice little ensemble for you. Floral print dress. Light chiffon top with lace trim around the collar. Knitted wool jacket ..."



BAXTER, CHRISTOPHER
WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR THEFT BY DECEPTION - FELONY.



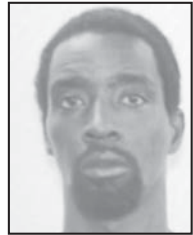
BENNETT, SONNY
WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR GIVING FALSE NAME, DOB, ADDRESS TO OFFICER/ST. CT. VOP/ THEFT BY TAKING.



BETHEL, ROBERT
WANTED BY THE BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR FALSE STATEMENTS AND WRITINGS AND THEFT BY DECEPTION.



BONEY, MADISON
WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY - FAMILY VIOLENCE AND CRIMINAL TRESPASS/ DAMAGE.



DENNIS, REGINALD
WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR AGGRAVATED ASSAULT.



GLOVER, JAQUAN
WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BENCH WARRANT/ RACKETEERING.



GRAHAM, ALISHA
WANTED BY HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BURGLARY WITH INTENT TO COMMIT A THEFT (FELONY) AND THEFT BY TAKING (FELONY).



HAYNES, DESIREE
WANTED BY THE BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY - FAMILY VIOLENCE.



JORDAN, JULIUS
WANTED BY THE BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUPERIOR CT. VOP/O/C BEING AGGRAVATED ASSAULT - FELONY.



KNOX, SUBUWR
WANTED BY THE BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR STATE CT. BENCH WARRANT/O/C DISORDERLY CONDUCT.



MCCRARY, DIONDRE
WANTED BY HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUPERIOR COURT - VOP - THEFT BY TAKING.



ROBINSON, ZION
WANTED BY HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR POSS. OF A FIREARM DURING COMM. OF A CRIME, POSS. OF A/F/A BY A CONVICTED FELON, V.G.C.S.A - POSS. OF MARIJUANA W/ INTENT TO DISTRIBUTE, V.G.C.S.A - POSS. OF A SCHEDULE I CONTROLLED SUBSTANCE.



SOLOMAN, AARON
WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. VOP/O/C BEING BURGLARY.



STRONG, JOEDAN
WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR AGGRAVATED ASSAULT WITH INTENT TO ROB - FELONY, POSS. OF A FIREARM OR KNIFE DURING THE COMM./ ATTEMPT TO COMMIT A FELONY, AND CRIMINAL ATTEMPT TO COMMIT ARMED ROBBERY - FELONY.



THOMAS, KEONTE
WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. VOP/O/C BEING AGGRAVATED ASSAULT AND POSS. OF A FIREARM DURING THE COMMISSION OF A FELONY.



WILLIS, DARIUS
WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUP. CT. VOP FOR ROBBERY BY INTIMIDATION.

WORKING WITH THE COMMUNITY TO PULL CRIMINALS OFF OUR STREETS! Mac On 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

POPEYE
BY RANDY MILOLLAND

STILL NEEDING A NEW SHIP, POPEYE IS BEING BROUGHT TO THE KINGDOM OF THE PAST BY HIS OLD ENEMY AND FORMER BABYSITTER, SEA HAG, AS SHE WORKS OFF FAVORS TO DAVY JONES.

WHY AM I TAKIN' YOU TO THE KINGDOM OF THE PAST, ANYWAY?

YER SISTER KIDNAPPED ME OLIVE T' GIT T' ME. I NEEDA GIT THERE 'FORE OLIVE MURDERS HER.

SHE'S GONNA END MY HATED SISTER, EH?

Y'KNOW, I PROMISED YOUR UNCLE I'D GET YOU THERE, I DIDN'T PROMISE WE'D BE ON TIME.

C'MON! YOU'RE ALL IN DANGER! YOU GOTTA GET!

WE'VE BEEN WAITIN' T' PETITION THE QUEEN FOR MONTHS. NOTHIN' SHORT OF A MIRACLE WILL MAKE US GO.

WOULD YOU SETTLE FOR SOME SIMPLE MAGIC?

I COMMEND YOU FOR WANTING TO GET THEM TO SAFETY.

THANKS FOR THE ASSIST, HOUDINI! MANDRAKE.

WHERE ARE WE? THE LAST MEMORY I HAVE IS SAYING GOODBYE TO A FEW OF MY FRIENDS.

I'M GUESSING YOU WERE ABDUCTED BY SEA HAG'S SISTER AND KEPT IN STASIS, LIKE THE OTHERS.

A WITCH WOULD CERTAINLY EXPLAIN THAT.

YOU'RE PRETTY BLASE ABOUT ALL OF THIS.

BOTH OF MY SIBLINGS TRIED TO KILL ME, AND ONE TIME BUG PEOPLE WANTED TO DISSECT ME. I DON'T BOTHER EASILY.

WHEN WE'RE DONE HERE, LET'S SEE IF WE CAN FIND A WAY TO MAGICALLY SUMMON A THERAPIST FOR YOU.

HOCUS-FOCUS BY HENRY BOLTINOFF

Find at least six differences in details between panels.

Differences: 1. Lapel is different. 2. Bow tie is missing. 3. Sign is smaller. 4. Napkin holder is missing. 5. Ear is smaller. 6. Sleeve is shorter.

Out on a Limb by Gary Kopervas

BIRTHDAY CARDS

WIFE HUSBAND SON DAUGHTER COUNTRY

FRIEND SPECIAL SOMEONE COUSIN GRANDMOTHER

GRANDFATHER NEPHEW NIECE NEIGHBOR

CROSSWORD 6-27-26

CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Sleep out in a tent
- 7 Nutrition std.
- 10 Fishing throw
- 14 Alpaca's kin
- 19 "Moonlight" actress Harris
- 20 Suffix of element names
- 21 Analogy words
- 22 Ancient Athens or Sparta, e.g.
- 23 Construction vehicles with tilting beds
- 25 Chooses a finger over a pacifier
- 27 Before, in verse
- 28 "The Raven" writer
- 29 German art songs
- 30 Qatari capital
- 31 1920s-'30s American mobster
- 36 Young lady
- 38 "Bali --"
- 39 Slugger Gehrig
- 40 Plant swelling
- 42 How food is often fried
- 44 Title dragon of a '70s kids' show
- 50 Silly sorts
- 53 French suffix with jardin
- 54 Neighbor of Venus
- 56 Fish-tailed males of myth

CLUES DOWN

- 57 Hi-tech "appt. book"
- 58 Radical type
- 60 1040 org.
- 62 Suffix with ball or bass
- 63 Roman 901
- 66 Northern French river
- 68 Roofing piece
- 70 Essential (to)
- 72 Stiff-bristled bath item
- 74 Dazed from a heavy blow
- 76 Incentive
- 77 GI no-shows
- 79 Small needle cases
- 80 Suffix with Canton
- 81 Turkey Day vegetable
- 82 GI R&R center
- 83 Racecar fuel
- 85 Articulate
- 87 River crafts
- 89 "Cool beans!"
- 91 Get weary
- 92 No-bake pie base
- 96 Some heirs' cash sources
- 99 Concerning kidneys
- 100 Brooklyn art institute
- 102 Granola bit
- 103 Big bush bird
- 104 Apiece
- 107 Brand of popcorn with peanuts
- 114 Part of UTEP
- 116 Deep and hoarse, as a voice
- 118 -- de toilette
- 119 Hugs, in a love letter
- 120 "Painful to face the reality!"
- 122 Speechless from shock
- 126 Very mad
- 127 Actor Liu of "Shang-Chi and the Legend of the Ten Rings"
- 128 Mined matter
- 129 Seance state
- 130 Stocking fiber
- 131 Padlock part
- 132 Oozy gunk
- 133 Alternatives to Cokes

- 55 Homer, e.g.
- 58 Not for sale
- 59 Matt of "Friends"
- 61 Taken-back auto, for one
- 63 Village People album with the song "Y.M.C.A."
- 64 Kind of roof with four sloping sides
- 65 Sort
- 67 Addition total
- 69 "Eureka!" moments
- 70 As originally placed
- 71 Minions' leader in "Despicable Me"
- 72 Fresno-to-L.A. dir.
- 73 Gossipy tidbit
- 75 Pertaining to an arm bone
- 78 Got the gold
- 82 Gorbachev's fed.
- 84 How- -- (DIY manuals)
- 86 "Of course!"
- 87 Nashville awards org.
- 88 Great elation
- 90 Rebuke to "Brute"
- 91 Ballet attire
- 92 Entered stealthily
- 93 Wed again
- 94 Anomalous
- 95 Affixes to a corkboard, e.g.
- 97 Cargo weight
- 98 Relatives, informally
- 101 Test out
- 105 Frau's "Alas!"
- 106 Pulverize
- 108 Prefix with biology
- 109 Tiny role
- 110 Wheel middle
- 111 Verbs' counterparts
- 112 Spherical bacteria
- 113 Improves superficially, with "up"

SUDOKU

5			1		
		2	3	5	
2	5				
1					3
			1		4

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

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

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

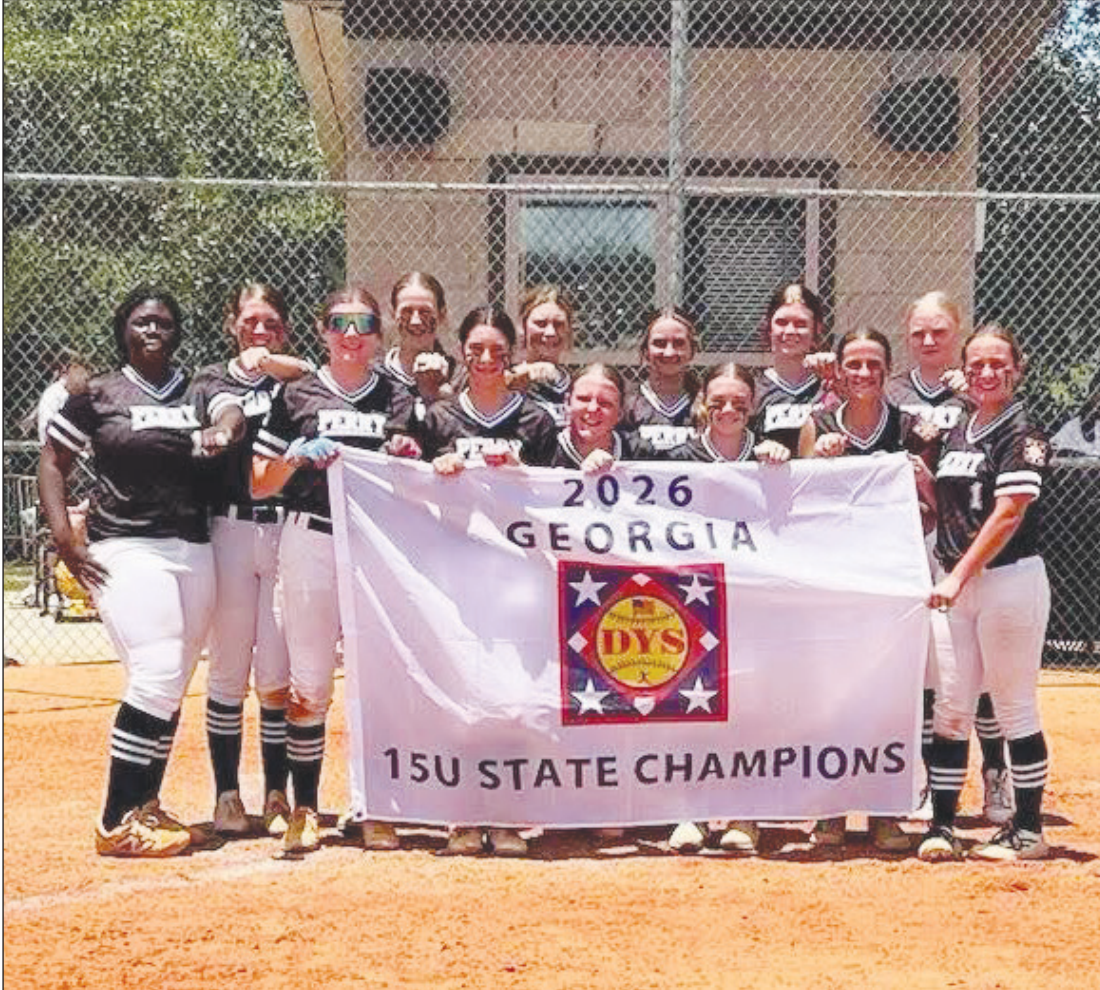
BONNIE "MICHELLE" SMITH, Esq.

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

MICHELLE SMITH
ATTORNEY AT LAW
P.O. Box 8633
WARNER ROBINS, GA 31095

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Houston County's latest little league champions



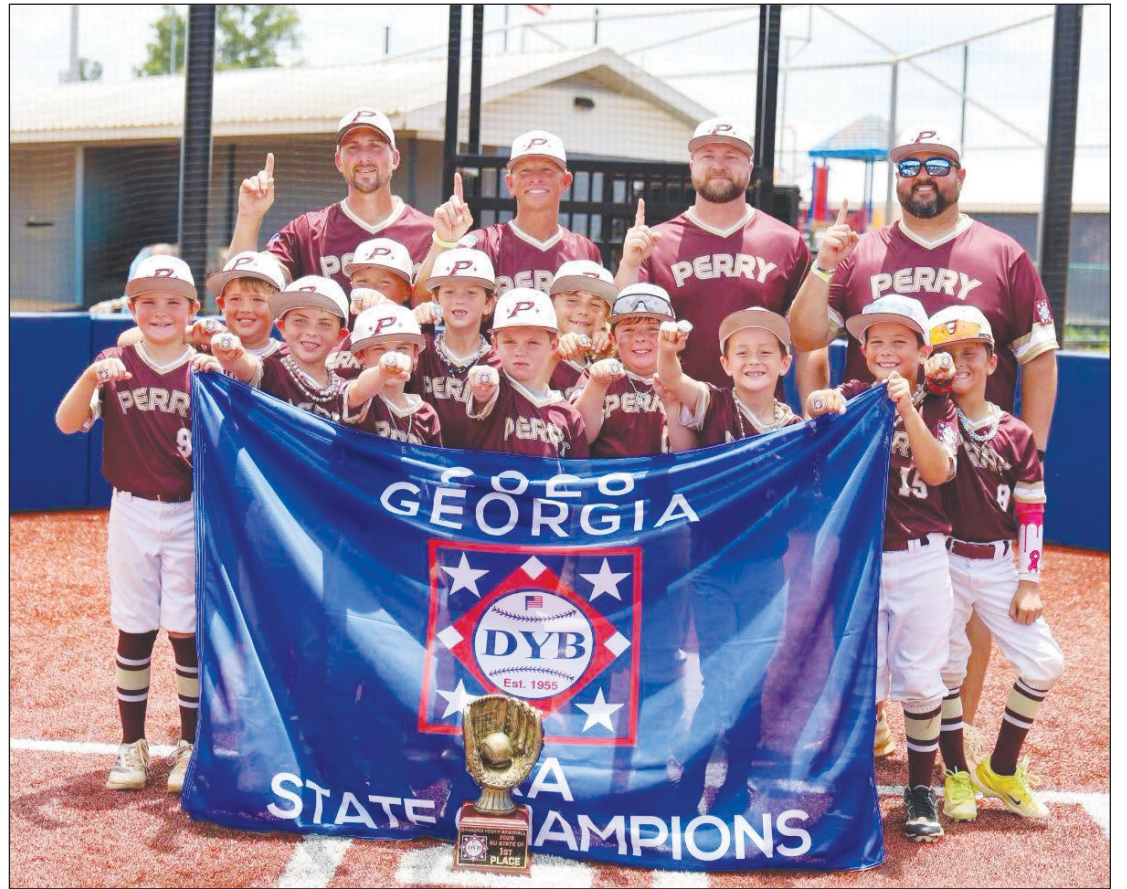
The Perry Junior League 15U All-Star softball team were crowned the 2026 Diamond Youth Softball state champions, and will represent Georgia in the DYS World Series in Laurel, Mississippi from July 16 to July 19.



The 10U girls won Warner Robins American Little League another District 5 championship on Wednesday, and now they advance to the state tournament at the WRALL complex starting July 6.



The Warner Robins American Little League 12U girls won their District 5 championship game 12-2 on Tuesday to claim their place in the Little League state tournament. That tournament begins on July 6 at the WRALL complex with a chance to represent Georgia in the regional tournament.



Perry Junior League's 8U All-Stars claimed the 2026 Diamond Youth Baseball State Championship over the weekend, and they will represent Georgia in the DYB World Series in Laurel, Mississippi from July 23 to July 27.

Healthcare Corner

Andrew Moore, Agent

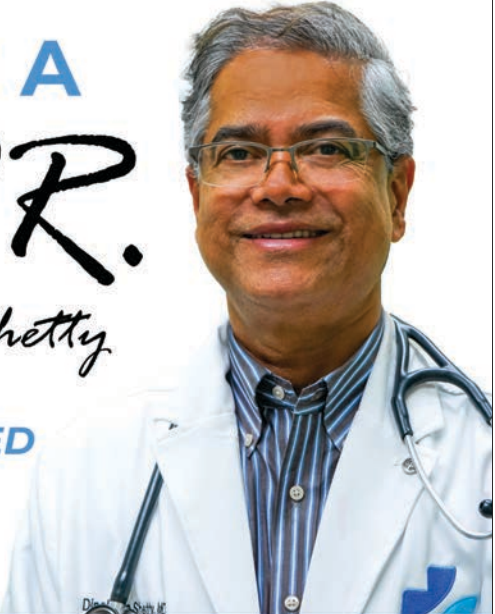


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Perry's first Division-1 soccer signee leaves behind lofty legacy

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

PERRY — Madilynn Foster joined the ranks of several record-breaking Houston County athletes after signing to play soccer at South Carolina State University on Monday.

Foster is the first Division-1 soccer commit in Perry High School history, and is the 25th Panther to earn an athletic scholarship this year, according to athletic director Tyler Rodgers.

She, and the Class of 2026, had a 62-14-1 overall record, were 40-0 in region games and extended the region championship streak to six in their four years.

Foster was responsible for 85 goals and 14 assists in her career, and finished with a 59.3 shot on target percentage.

Her mother, Asher Foster, knew her daughter was destined for greatness from the moment she kicked a soccer ball at three-years-old.

"I kind of already knew [it was going to happen], I'm just going to be honest. ... Even though she said she wasn't going to play soccer anymore [after high school] ... I still knew that God was bigger," Asher Foster said.

It didn't come without its fair share of difficulties, including injuries. Madilynn Foster was sidelined during her senior playoff run because of them.

"I've always had ankle problems and everything like that, but I know I've conquered and recovered ... [that] allows me to pursue this great sport that I love to play so much." Madilynn Foster said. "Just knowing that, I really can do anything that I put my mind to."

"It's just something in me



Clay Brown/HHJ

Madilynn Foster (center right) signs to play soccer at South Carolina State University during her June signing day. Foster is the first Division-1 soccer signee in Perry High School history.

that's driven," she said. "I can't stop playing this sport. I was always just like, 'Okay, I need to keep going. This is something that I really want to do.'"

Madilynn Foster first garnered college attention during her sophomore year at the Middle Georgia Invitational. Her mother called it a "beautiful experience," and it opened her to the possibility of playing past high school.

"I was just like, 'Okay, I'm out there, my name is out there,'" Madilynn Foster said.

However, she never received any offers. She originally didn't intend to play soccer in college for that reason, but everything changed about a month before her signing day.

South Carolina State reached out, and a week later the Foster family was on campus for a visit. She wasn't planning on attending a Historically Black College and University at first, her sights were set on Georgia Southern University, but her brief time in Orangeburg, South Carolina felt like home.

"Just to see the HBCU, the environment I was in, it felt like home to me," Madilynn Foster said. "I'm grateful that I do have this opportunity to learn more about historical Black culture and learning to get more involved with the same type of people as me. In this world it's very hard to recognize and realize that."

Her mother also appreciates the chance to learn.

"I think it's important that she knows history ... The people who helped build a solid foundation, I think it's very important," Asher Foster said. "I was very excited for the opportunity for her to go and learn more."

Madilynn Foster is looking forward to a lot when she moves on campus soon. She plans to be an exercise science major with the goal of becoming a physical therapist.

"I'm mainly looking forward to developing my skill [and] talent ... Connecting with the girls, making new friends and hoping just to be seen more professionally," Madilynn Foster said.

Pet News

If your pet goes missing please contact your local animal shelter, also provide a picture.



FOPAS Rescue of the Month

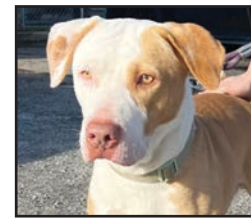


Chessa Calico
 1-3 Yrs
 Female
 Medium



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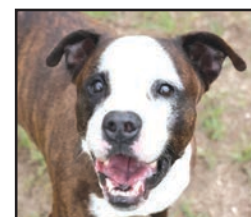


Buster
 Boxer Mix
 Adult - Male - Medium
 Apricot/Beige

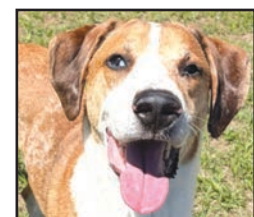


Mabel
 DSH
 Adult - Female - Medium
 Tabby

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Bing Bong
 Boxer Pitbull Mix
 6 Yrs - Male - Medium
 Brindle/White

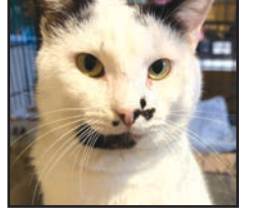


Dandy
 Catahoula Mix
 7 Yrs - Male - Medium
 Red Merle/White

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 810 Carl Vinson Pkwy., Centerville - 478-599-0211
www.hshoco.org adoptions@HumaneSocietyHoCo.org



Foxworthy
 Collie/Corgi mix
 3 Yrs - Male - Small
 Cream/White



Enrique
 Tuxedo
 2 Yrs - Male - Medium
 White/Black

5 Tips for Pet Safety on the 4th of July

The Fourth of July is a great summer holiday filled with some really fun activities. For humans, pets can find this holiday pretty stressful between extra people, overstimulation from increased activity, and of course the loud fireworks. If you have cats, keep your windows closed to prevent cats from making an escape through a loose window screen. Make sure if you are having people over, they are aware as they are going in and out that your dog or cat is not following along. Even better, give your pet their own space for the night away from guests, loud noises, or access to the outdoors. Playing soothing music or play a tv. Consider getting products like Thundershirts or calming collars. If you are worried about your pet, think about skipping the festivities and stay at home cuddled up with them so they know they are safe with their person.

Secure doors and fences
 One of the most common reasons pets go missing during the 4th of July holiday is due to sneaking out when guests arrive, running full speed at a door or fence when a firework scares them, or when owners or guests are distracted and leave doors open.

While it may look cute to add a glow necklace to your pet, it could do lots of harm if they chew and ingest any of the material. The ASPCA says that while not highly toxic, "excessive drooling and gastrointestinal irritation could still result from the ingestion, and intestinal blockage could occur from swallowing pieces of the plastic casing."

Keep pets away from glow sticks, alcohol, and citronella insect control products
 While it may look cute to add a glow necklace to your pet, it could do lots of harm if they chew and ingest any of the material. The ASPCA says that while not highly toxic, "excessive drooling and gastrointestinal irritation could still result from the ingestion, and intestinal blockage could occur from swallowing pieces of the plastic casing."

Keep them cool
 The Fourth of July can be one of the hottest days of the summer. Animals are at risk for heatstroke, just like people. Be sure your dog has plenty of shade and cool water and limit exercise. Watch for warning signs like excessive panting, drooling, muscle tremors, and limited urine output. Contact your veterinarian or the emergency vet immediately if you suspect your pet is suffering from heatstroke. Make sure you do not leave your pet in the car during any activities, especially fireworks. It's best to keep them at home.

Keep collars on, update your information and get your pet chipped!

If your pet manages to get out, the best way to get them back is to make sure they have the proper identification. Consider getting your pet microchipped. If your pet is already microchipped make sure your information is up-to-date. Your pet's identification tag should be up-to-date with at a minimum your current phone number and the pet's name. *TIP: It is a great idea to add "Microchipped" to your pet's tag as well!

Keep collars on, update your information and get your pet chipped!

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Volume 8 Number 7

July 2026

1 Section, 8 Pages

Robins AFB internships 'JumpStart' STEM careers for Middle Georgia students



U.S. Air Force photo by Kisha Foster Johnson

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Matthew Smith, a participant in the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation (SMART) Scholars program, greets other participants during an orientation at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, June 15, 2026. The program is one of two at the base, which helps college students break into civilian Air Force careers by offering hands-on training, internships and starter roles.



U.S. Air Force photo by Kisha Foster Johnson

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Adrienne Latimer, program manager for the Science, Mathematics, and Research for Transformation Scholars program, welcomes college students enrolled in either the JumpStart or SMART Scholars programs, which are education to career pipelines initiatives, at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, June 15, 2026. The programs help students begin civilian Air Force careers by connecting them with training, internships and early career roles.

By **BRIENNA SMITH**
HHJ Managing Editor
brienna@hhjonline.com

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE — Robins Air Force Base is investing in the next generation of scientists and engineers through two intensive summer programs that offer students far more than a line on their resume.

The SMART Program and the Jump Start Internship Program give Middle Georgia students paid, hands-on experience supporting real Air Force missions, and, for many, a direct path to a full-time career on base.

A 20-year pipeline: The SMART program

Although it's relatively new to some local students, the SMART Scholarship-for-Service program has been a Department of Defense mainstay for two decades.

"It's not a new program," said Adrienne Latimer, a program manager on base. "It's actually a Department of War program. It has been

going on for over 20 years. This year is its 20th anniversary."

SMART is open to college students in STEM fields as well as current employees on base. Scholars can have their tuition paid, receive a stipend, and complete summer internships at installations like Robins. For employees, the program can also cover salary while they're in school.

"If they actually work on base, then they're considered retention scholars," Latimer said. "They can actually get their scholarship paid for, and even get their salary paid for while they're on base, while they're in school as well."

The program is highly selective. Latimer said thousands of applicants apply each year across Army, Navy, Air Force and other defense agencies and only a fraction are chosen. Applicants must maintain at least a 3.0 GPA, be able to obtain a security clearance, and be available to work during the summer.

This year, Robins is hosting 14 SMART interns, all college students in STEM fields. They arrived around May 18 and will stay until early August.

All are placed in science and engineering roles, from software engineering to mechanical and aerospace projects and even supply chain.

"The interns, they actually contribute, they have hands-on experience," Latimer said. "They're given hands-on experience to do the jobs that the supervisors have selected them to do...they're actually contributing to the mission on base."

SMART scholars are expected to return to Robins after they graduate.

"That's one of the requirements of the program," Latimer said. "Once they graduate from college, then they do work full time on base."

While SMART is a nationwide program, Robins' implementation has a strong local focus.

"For Middle Georgia, for the SMART program, majority of the scholars are from Georgia that work on Robins Air Force Base," Latimer said.

The base partners with local colleges and universities and recruits across Middle Georgia and the broader Southeast. That strategy has an economic impact as well as a workforce one.

"If the student is coming from, say, another state, then it's bringing that particular student to Middle Georgia, which helps with the revenue," Latimer said.

Latimer, an engineer who interned herself while in college, said she hopes participants remember more than just the technical work.

"The things that I took away from my internship was the experience itself, the people that I met, the networks that I gained over the years. I'm still connected to them," she said. "That's what they will actually remember from the internship."

'JumpStart' for high school graduates

If SMART catches students in college, JumpStart reaches them even earlier, right after high school.

The JumpStart Internship Program is designed for graduating high school seniors from Middle Georgia who plan to major in computer science, computer engineering or electrical engineering.

"The goal of this program is to promote interest in STEM disciplines and develop a steady pipeline of employees for Robins Air Force Base," said Katherine Ficklin, the program's director.

Started in 2021 within the 402nd Software Engineering Group, the program runs eight to 10 weeks each summer. It's based at Project Synergy, an off-base facility created to give software teams and interns more freedom with tools and networks than they might have behind the base firewall.

"We wanted a space where we can have the freedom to build, create, innovate," Ficklin said.

This year, JumpStart hosts 44 interns, 26 freshmen and 18 sophomores, all from Middle Georgia counties including Houston, Bibb, Pulaski and Peach.

JumpStart is structured as a two-year experience. Freshman interns start with a Python boot camp, gradually building their coding skills each week. In the afternoons, they rotate through soft-skills and college readiness lessons, including professional etiquette, public speaking, finance and budgeting, time management.

Sophomore interns, many who completed the program as freshmen, move into more independent work that blends hardware and software.

"Right now they're in class doing motherboards and playing with the resistors and doing all the things incorporated in the hard-

ware and the software part together," Ficklin said. "It's more getting them ready to actually sit on a project inside the squadrons, where they will have a project manager and deliverables they have to provide."

At the end of each summer, interns give formal presentations on their work. Squadron leaders from across the software engineering group attend and take note.

"It's kind of like an interview process," Ficklin said. "Squadron directors are also evaluating them...who could possibly be working in their squadron in a few years."

After two summers in JumpStart, students "graduate" into the Embedded Intern Program, where they're placed directly inside squadrons to work on real-world projects. That program is coordinated by Ashley Westmoreland.

Competitive and selective interest in JumpStart is high, and growing.

Last year, Ficklin said, about 70 students applied for the freshman class. Only 26 were accepted.

"It's not necessarily a whole application process, but there is an application packet," she said.

Applicants submit a resume, cover letter, two letters of recommendation and responses to video interview questions before being invited for an in-person interview.

Students can only enter as freshmen the summer after they graduate high school. There is no direct entry as a sophomore; those spots are reserved for returning interns.

As the program has matured, Ficklin said, the team has tightened its focus.

"When the program started, it was kind of open to anyone...who was interested in going to college, and our goal was to kind of influence them to go into STEM," she said. "Now we've made it a little bit harder to get in. We clearly focus on STEM majors so that we can make sure that they are ready to effectively perform in our squadrons."

Both SMART and JumpStart require strong academics, but Ficklin emphasized that grades alone aren't enough.

"We need to see a more well-rounded person," she said. "We work in teams a lot, so soft skills are something that we really harp on."

Among the qualities she and her team look for: adaptability, initiative, collaboration, accountability, analytical thinking, innovation and integrity.

"Soft skills, communication, confidence," Ficklin said. "Be confident in who you are, speak confidently, introduce yourself confidently...Once you apply, you're competing against other students, so you want to make sure that you stand out, and soft skills are the way to do that."

A 'fresh perspective' for the mission

For Robins, the benefit isn't just future hires. Interns contribute immediately to the base's mission, since the 402nd Software Engineering Group seeks to hire nearly 200 engineering professionals a year.

"This program is a feeder into our pipeline to make sure that we always have engineers coming up," Ficklin said.

Interns also bring a different lens to long-standing technical problems.

"They bring a new, fresh perspective," Ficklin said. "The students come in, for example, knowing all about AI, how to implement it, how useful it is, the different tools that are available, whereas we have to take classes to learn that."

That perspective, she said, helps Robins "stay on top of our game and provide the best technology and the best product to the mission and the warfighters."

Security, structure and support networks

For many young people, their first surprise is security.

"They were really overwhelmed with the amount of security that we have," Ficklin said.

Once on the job, students begin to see how their "little piece" of work fits into a much larger picture, from software tools to systems that support airmen and aircraft.

They also gain a network.

Ficklin said one former intern recently told her he learned "more in one week" at the program than in an entire semester-long class. Others talk about the friendships and the comfort of entering college with people they already know.

"You get to go to college with a built-in friend already, because you've met them, you worked with them all summer," she said.

Weekly events, including a base-wide intern meetup that drew more than 90 interns, help them connect across units and schools.

"I hope they remember that we prepared them for college," Ficklin said. "That they learned the basics, the foundation of professionalism that will help them throughout their entire life."

Building Middle Georgia's STEM future

For both Latimer and Ficklin, the goal is the same: keep local talent local, give students meaningful experience, and strengthen the workforce that supports the base and the region.

"We have great talent in Middle Georgia," Ficklin said. "We just need to tap into them and get them to stay here. Middle Georgia is a great place to live, work and play."

With SMART and JumpStart, Robins Air Force Base is betting that early, intensive exposure to real-world engineering, and a strong support network, will pay off for students, the base and Middle Georgia for years to come.

First Article Test Lab: Ensuring Air Force readiness through rigorous parts validation

By Joseph Mather
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. --

In an era of increasing global uncertainty, the U.S. Air Force's ability to project air power at a moment's notice hinges on the meticulous maintenance and readiness of its aircraft.

At the heart of this mission is the First Article Test Lab, a specialized unit within the 802nd Maintenance Support Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, dedicated to ensuring every spare part meets the highest standards of quality and reliability.

The lab's work is a comprehensive and vital process that directly contributes to the operational readiness of the Air Force. Before a

new part from a contractor is approved for full-scale production, it undergoes a battery of rigorous tests to verify that it meets exact design specifications. This crucial step prevents potentially catastrophic failures and ensures the integrity of the Air Force supply chain.

"To ensure mission success and bring our crews home safely, every aircraft must be airworthy and reliable," said Dustin Collins, 802nd MXSS Laboratory Production Flight chief. "In First Article Testing, we are the first line of defense, certifying that every spare part meets the design drawing requirements and specifications."

The consequences of a single faulty component can be severe. Collins recounted a recent instance where the

lab's vigilance prevented a potentially disastrous situation.

"The use of incorrect materials in components represents one of the most severe defects we encounter in the First Article Test Lab," he said. "In a recent case, a vendor-supplied part, certified as correctly heat-treated, failed our lab's hardness testing to verify the material's strength. Had this part been used in an aircraft repair, the discrepancy in material properties could have resulted in premature equipment failure, with potentially catastrophic consequences depending on the specific component."

The lab's meticulous inspections are particularly critical for some of the Air Force's key weapons systems, including the C-17,

C-130, F-15 and C-5 aircraft. The availability of high-quality spare parts is essential for keeping these aircraft mission ready and able to respond to global contingencies without delay.

"If a plane is in for periodic maintenance and requires a new part, it's important that the replacement is a quality part that will last until its next repair cycle," said Collins. "Having quality spare parts on hand ensures the mechanics can repair the planes quickly and get them ready to fly for any urgent mission around the world."

The First Article Test Lab's impact extends beyond immediate readiness, playing a crucial role in the long-term sustainment of the Air Force's fleet. By

preventing the introduction of substandard parts into the supply chain, the lab helps to avoid costly repairs and extends the lifespan of aging aircraft.

"Our overall mission at the WR-ALC is to deliver air power and combat readiness for our nation," said Collins. "The First Article Testing team fuels this mission by providing expert analysis that ensures our mission partners achieve on time, on cost and high-quality depot maintenance. If we do that successfully, we eliminate delays and guarantee the availability of critical parts to keep our aircraft mission ready."

As technology continues to advance, the First Article Test Lab remains at the forefront of innovation. The team is constantly explor-

ing new methods and technologies to enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of its testing processes. This forward-looking approach ensures that the lab is prepared to meet the evolving needs of the Air Force and to continue its vital role in safeguarding the nation's air power.

"I think there will always be a need for First Article Testing in the Air Force to ensure initial quality of manufactured parts," said Collins. "However, as technology advances, inspection and testing equipment will not only perform these checks with increased speed and efficiency, but they will also capture a level of detail that was previously impossible."



U.S. Air Force photo by Joseph Mather

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Michael Sottile, 802nd Maintenance Support Squadron Physical Science Laboratory mechanical engineer, uses a micrometer to check the thickness of a first article aircraft part at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, March 25, 2026. The dimensional analysis was used to determine if the first article aircraft part matched the engineering drawings.



U.S. Air Force photo by Joseph Mather

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Kendall Tew, 802nd Maintenance Support Squadron Physical Science Laboratory chemist, uses a spectrometer to perform an inorganic composition analysis of a metal alloy at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, March 25, 2026. The spectrometer instrument determined if the correct alloys were used to make aircraft parts.



U.S. Air Force photo by Joseph Mather

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Tim Yalcin, 802nd Maintenance Support Squadron Physical Science Laboratory materials engineer, evaluates a stainless-steel gas tube to determine the metal's grain size at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, March 25, 2026. The grain size of the stainless-steel gas tube was evaluated to ensure it met the required specifications.

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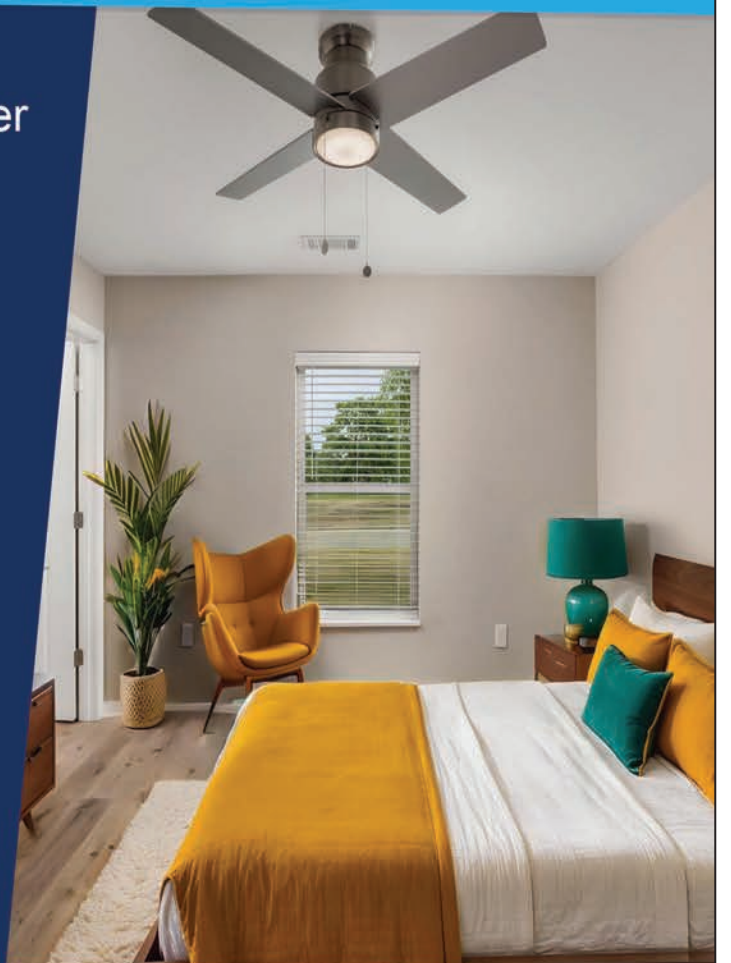
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53rd CAOS Airmen fast-track critical runway repairs at Andersen AFB



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Manasseh Demissie

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — Senior Airman Joaquin Trice, left, 53rd Combat Airfield Operations Squadron radar, airfield and weather system technician, and Senior Airman Douglas Wolff, 53rd CAOS radar, airfield and weather systems supervisor, work together to set up the glide slope antenna for a Deployable Instrument Landing System at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, June 3, 2026. The 53rd CAOS team traveled from Robins AFB, Georgia, to Guam to assist with flightline restoration following Super Typhoon Sinlaku.

By Lauren Boggs
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- A team with the 461st Air Control Wing's 53rd Combat Airfield Operations Squadron traveled to Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, from Robins AFB, Georgia, June 2-9, 2026, to get a runway back in working order before a major exercise in the Indo-Pacific

region. In April 2026, Super Typhoon Sinlaku caused nearly \$40 million in damage to facilities and equipment across Andersen AFB, including several flightline structures. During the storm, 53rd CAOS was able to contact Andersen's Airmen over video call and instruct them on how to take down the Deployable Instrument Landing System's glide slope, a

50-foot-tall-antenna that helps calculate an aircraft's approach and rate of descent. "It's for inclement weather operations where they can't see the runway, so they're using Instrument Flight Rules," said Tech. Sgt. Christopher McCorquodale, 53rd CAOS HVAC noncommissioned officer in charge. Under IFR, flights are primarily conducted by referencing onboard instruments

and navigation systems in coordination with air traffic control. "The glide slope basically tells the planes where they're positioned in relation to the runway. Without that, that runway was not going to be operational for the Valiant Shield exercise," he continued. Working under a tight schedule, a team of six 53rd CAOS Airmen traveled to Andersen AFB and com-

pressed the typical five-day setup into just two days to ensure airfield readiness for the exercise. "We got to work the day after we got off the plane," he said. "Single runway operations is not fun for the exercise out there, so we wanted to get that system up and running as fast as possible for them so they could do their training sorties before the exercise to make sure that everything's

good." The recovery effort required setting up the system's 50-foot-tall glide slope mast and coordinating with a flight check team out of Oklahoma to validate that the device was aligned within its tolerances.

"The big challenge was stressing before flight check if that radar was going to be aligned properly," McCorquodale said. "We got it within tolerances for all three, so it was a very big celebration all around."

With the 53rd CAOS's fix, the runway can again provide precision approaches and landings for aircraft in all weather conditions, increasing air traffic capacity, safety and efficiency of the airfield. The successful setup yielded immediate results.

"Right after we finished, we had four F-35s depart from our runway, and that was our certification for the event," said McCorquodale.

Although the team was only assigned to set up a singular glide slope antenna, they assisted with flight checks by handling the radios for all Andersen AFB's localizers and other glide slopes.

"There were two days of flight check planned, and we got it knocked out in 2.5 hours," added McCorquodale.

The Airmen served a crucial role in operational readiness efforts by having the runway prepared in time for Exercise Valiant Shield, set to start June 22. The biennial joint field training exercise brings together each branch of the U.S. Armed Forces and partner nations across the Indo-Pacific to exercise a wide range of capabilities and demonstrate the strength and flexibility of joint and combined forces.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Manasseh Demissie

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — Senior Airman Douglas Wolff, 53rd Combat Airfield Operations Squadron radar, airfield and weather systems supervisor out of Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, helps calibrate a Deployable Instrument Landing System's glide slope antenna at Andersen AFB, Guam, June 3, 2026. The 53rd CAOS team helped prepare the runway ahead of a major exercise in the Indo-Pacific region.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Manasseh Demissie

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — Airman 1st Class Matia Gardner, 53rd Combat Airfield Operations Squadron radio, airfield and weather systems technician, smiles while working atop a glide slope antenna at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, June 3, 2026. Six 53rd CAOS Airmen from Robins AFB, Georgia, traveled to the base to assist with repairs and restoration of the base's runways.



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Manasseh Demissie

ANDERSEN AIR FORCE BASE, Guam — Airman 1st Class Matia Gardner, 53rd Combat Airfield Operations Squadron radio, airfield and weather systems technician, works on a part while setting up a Deployable Instrument Landing System's glide slope at Andersen Air Force Base, Guam, June 3, 2026. The 461st Air Control Wing's 53rd CAOS sent a team of Airmen from Robins AFB, Georgia, to support runway recovery efforts following Typhoon Sinlaku.



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A PUBLICATION BY THE HOUSTON HOME JOURNAL
A DIVISION OF THE GEORGIA TRUST FOR LOCAL NEWS

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The Houston Home Journal, is a periodical, mailed (ISSN 471) in Perry and is published Wednesday and Saturday by Houston Home Journal P.O. Box 1910, Perry, GA 31069; 478-987-1823

Subscription Rates:
In county - \$88
Senior Citizen (60) - \$78
Out of County or State - \$98
Online Access only - \$58

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Recruiting the best: Keeping critical skills manned at WR-ALC



The Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex is seeking to hire and retain a highly skilled workforce to maintain and repair critical aircraft within the Department of War.

By Joseph Mather
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE
BASE, Ga. --

The Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex is seeking to hire and retain a highly skilled workforce to maintain and repair critical aircraft within the Department of War.

To achieve this, the Human Resources Management Branch of the

Business Office is focused on recruiting, hiring, developing and retaining a force of more than 6,000 personnel at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia.

The branch is comprised of three sections, each with a unique mission.

The Management Human Resource Support Section handles a variety of human resource-centric programs and management support

activities.

The Personnel Support Section executes requests for personnel action activities to support a wide variety of personnel hiring, reassignments, resignations and retirements.

The Talent Acquisition Section is responsible for executing strategic outreach and recruitment initiatives to fill approximately 500-700 external requirements

for the complex annually. Additionally, this team is responsible for establishing and sustaining community partnerships with routine engagements with middle schools, high schools, colleges and universities. They market the WR-ALC brand, manage hiring events and travel to other military installations to find separating active-duty candidates.

"These community engagements and partnerships are tailored to meet the specific needs of the WR-ALC and include programs such as internships, co-op programs and job fairs," Melissa Rivera, Human Resources Management Chief, said.

Rivera said valuable lessons were learned from past hiring experiences, such as the "1,200 in 12" initiative in 2018, which required hiring 1,200 people in 12 months.

"Since that time, the team has implemented changes to its hiring process, including the use of skill-specific hiring events and an unbiased, systematic selection process to identify potential candidates who have applied via the WR-ALC website and whose resumes are maintained in the resume repository," she said. "These changes have ensured that the hiring process is fair and transparent."

The WR-ALC uses a skills analysis process to determine the career specialties needed to keep critical skills manned throughout the complex. This involves analyzing data and identifying trends to develop targeted recruitment strategies.

Those seeking a career with the WR-ALC can visit the WR-ALC page on the Robins website at <https://www.robins.af.mil/Units/WR-Air-Logistics-Complex/>.

Air Force advances future of air superiority with CCA contracts



Courtesy photo

A YFQ-44A, part of the Air Force's Collaborative Combat Aircraft (CCA) program, undergoes an undated captive carry test at a California test location. This test phase uses inert munitions to methodically validate weapons integration, structural performance and safety, ensuring the platform can safely carry external stores. The CCA program is a critical part of a larger, integrated system-of-systems designed to extend the reach and effectiveness of crewed aircraft, giving U.S. warfighters an overwhelming advantage in future conflicts.



Courtesy photo

A YFQ-42A Collaborative Combat Aircraft takes off during flight testing at a California test location. The aircraft was developed in partnership with General Atomics as part of the Air Force's effort to accelerate delivery of affordable, semi-autonomous aircraft.

Secretary of the Air Force Public Affairs

ARLINGTON,
Va. (AFNS) --

The Department of the Air Force awarded several contracts for the Collaborative Combat Aircraft program, including Increment 1 air vehicles as well as mission autonomy software, in a push to rapidly field advanced combat capabilities.

These distinct efforts validate acquisition transformation principles to secure a critical operational advantage: decoupling hardware from software. By treating mission autonomy as "software sold separately," the Air Force ensures that the warfighter receives state-of-the-art physical platforms alongside agile, easily updatable software, effectively breaking traditional procurement molds.

Building upon decades of responsible, semi-autonomous flight development, CCA represent the next critical evolution of airpower. CCA are designed to seamlessly integrate with crewed fighters to extend reach, awareness and survivability in contested environments. This human-ma-

chine teaming will serve as a powerful deterrent, signaling to adversaries the futility of challenging U.S. airpower.

"Collaborative Combat Aircraft change how we project power and generate mass in highly contested environments," said Air Force Chief of Staff Gen. Ken Wilsbach. "Delivering this capability to our warfighters faster ensures our forces maintain the tactical edge required to deter and, if necessary, defeat any adversary."

The Hardware: Accelerating physical mass

The Air Force awarded engineering and manufacturing development and production contracts to General Atomics, FQ-42, and Anduril, FQ-44, for CCA Increment 1.

Awarded four months ahead of schedule, these contracts signify that the FQ-42 and FQ-44 meet rigorous mission requirements and are ready for full-scale manufacturing. The decision follows a competitive source selection process, identifying the systems as the most capable and cost-effective solutions to maintain air superiority in an increasingly complex

and contested global threat environment.

"By moving fast from competitive selection into full-scale manufacturing, we position ourselves to field highly credible and combat-ready semi-autonomous systems to stay ahead of the pacing challenge," said Secretary of the Air Force Troy Meink. "These contracts reaffirm our confidence in the strategic path forward for the program to procure over 150 combat capable CCA by the end of the decade."

The Software: Accelerated fielding and unmatched flexibility

Equally critical to the CCA ecosystem is the mission autonomy software. The Air Force awarded mission autonomy production contracts to a pool of six vendors, establishing a competitive marketplace for the program.

The baseline, six-year contract vehicle provides the framework for continuous competition and rapid software development. The following vendors have been selected for this baseline contract pool:

- Anduril
- General Atomics
- Lockheed Martin

- Northrop Grumman
- RTX Collins Aerospace
- Shield AI

Additionally, the Air Force has competitively awarded production options to Anduril, RTX Collins Aerospace, and Shield AI, to accelerate the delivery of critical mission autonomy software. This targeted award, based on the vendors' ability to meet aggressive schedule and affordability requirements, will fund the first of two six-month competitive phases designed to speed the fielding of operational software to the warfighter.

While the baseline contract establishes a continuous competitive arena, the competitive awards are designed to deliver capability faster. Following the initial six-month period, the Air Force will evaluate the vendors' progress and execute a second competitive award period. This performance-based competition will culminate in the selection of a primary mission autonomy provider for CCA Increment 1, with award planned for selection by summer 2027.

"Mission autonomy is the cornerstone of the CCA

concept, and leveraging a competitive, multi-vendor environment ensures we capture the latest technology," Meink said. "This approach guarantees our Airmen are equipped with state-of-the-art capabilities today but keeps the door open for the breakthroughs necessary to maintain air superiority."

Furthermore, this software contract leverages a first-of-its-kind award fee exposure strategy, which enables operator feedback and combat performance to determine what the Air Force pays for mission autonomy. The Air Force will only pay the entire licensing fee if a vendor provides a combat capability aligned with warfighter needs and feedback. The licensing approach also allows the Air Force to award software licenses to any of the six vendors within the pool at any point over the next six years. This approach ensures the Air Force can procure the best-performing and most affordable solutions as technology evolves.

A Unified Evolution of Airpower

A key enabler of this strategy is the government-owned Autonomy Government Reference Architecture (A-GRA). Continuous A-GRA compliance is required for all vendors and serves as the foundational open systems architecture that decouples software from hardware. This ensures that mission autonomy software from any vendor in the pool can be easily integrated, quickly updated, and ported across different physical aircraft platforms, giving the warfighter unparalleled operational flexibility to adapt to evolving threats.

"Open systems architecture is critical in modern warfare," Wilsbach said. "It allows us to capitalize on the most advanced autonomy solutions to ensure we incorporate the best technology in our weapon systems."

The Air Force intends to field approximately 1,000 combat-capable CCA, employing an acquisition strategy built on continuous competition to drive down cost over time while scaling fighter capacity.

Airman develops innovative training platform to enhance readiness



Staff Sgt. Chad Stricker, 66th Medical Squadron noncommissioned officer in charge of education and training, poses for a portrait at Fort Sam Houston, Texas, June 12. Stricker's idea, selected as a quarter finalist in the AFWERX Spark Tank 2026 competition, focuses on improving the way Tactical Combat Casualty Care courses are taught and is designed to connect classroom instruction and combat reality through virtual reality technology with physical movement to provide a performance-based assessment to create a more consistent and realistic training program.

Courtesy photo

By Mark Herlihy
66th Air Base Group
Public Affairs

HANSCOM AIR FORCE
BASE, Mass. --
When Staff Sgt. Chad

Stricker developed an idea to improve patient care training, it was not to compete in an Air Force innovation contest.

Instead, the 66th Medical Squadron noncommis-

sioned officer in charge of education and training was focused on improving the way Tactical Combat Casualty Care courses are taught.

"Throughout my career,

I noticed inconsistencies in Tactical Combat Casualty Care courses," said Stricker. "It got me thinking about how to facilitate a more consistent and realistic training program."

The result was STRIKE-MED, a kinetic medical training platform designed to connect classroom instruction and combat reality through virtual reality technology with physical movement and a performance-based assessment.

The concept simulates real-world stress by pairing augmented reality devices with physical training, allowing users to move, react and make decisions in immersive operational scenarios to generate objective, artificial intelligence-driven human performance metrics.

"My goal is to train our medics, and other career fields, in a way that simulates patients getting the care they need while in dangerous situations, such as a hostile force firing at them," said Stricker. "The VR headset would provide the virtual environment needed to increase realism and create a level of stress they may not otherwise experience during training."

The concept has attracted attention beyond the classroom. Earlier this year, STRIKE-MED was selected as a quarter finalist in the AFWERX Spark Tank 2026 competition.

According to AFWERX, Spark Tank is an annual pitch competition designed to encourage innovation across the Department of the Air Force by accelerating the adoption of emerging technologies and empowering Airmen and Guardians to solve operational challenges.

Staff Sgt. Juan Melendez Caballero, 66th Medical Squadron NCO in charge of preventative dentistry, participated in early trials and provided feedback on his experience using a prototype of the concept.

"The virtual reality-based training was engaging and an innovative way to apply critical-thinking and decision-making skills in realistic combat casualty scenarios," he said.

During a training environment held earlier this year, 14 operational medics across multiple career fields, ranging from airman 1st class to captain, tested the concept.

"The results were significant," said Stricker. "We saw a 13.7 percent increase in TCCC cognitive confidence under stress, and 92.8 percent of the testers explicitly recommended formal adoption of the platform."

STRIKE-MED integrates emerging technologies to create a training environment that forces medics' bodies and minds to train together.

As development continues, Stricker is seeking military-connected partners with engineering or software development experience to help move the project forward.

"I am a medic by trade," he said. "I am not a software engineer, but I love technology and I am always willing to learn. I just want to get this off the ground and help out our force."

Matrina's calling – from wrong turn to triple-award provider



By Laisa Leao
412th Test Wing

EDWARDS AIR FORCE BASE, Calif. --

Sometimes, the best career paths are discovered by accident.

For Matrina McCullough, a simple trip to enroll her son in daycare blossomed into an award-winning vocation and a movement to expand childcare for military families.

Born in Pennsylvania and raised in North Carolina, McCullough met her future husband in high school. After he enlisted in the Air Force, the couple moved to their first duty station at Langley Air Force Base, Virginia, where they soon welcomed three sons.

Looking for childcare options, McCullough visited the base child development center to enroll her eldest. But by a twist of fate, instead of walking into a standard parent orientation, she found herself in an information session for the Family Child Care program.

The FCC program authorizes military spouses living in base housing to operate paid childcare businesses from their homes, serving both military and civilian families. Intrigued by the concept, McCullough stayed for the weeklong training and became a certified provider.

The transition was no

small undertaking. It required a thorough background check, securing a business license and transforming her family's living room into a fully equipped daycare. She developed daily curricula and meal schedules, turning to social media to research new early childhood education techniques.

"I was able to stay home with my own children, and they had friends to play with," McCullough said. "We are not just a daycare. We are all family in here."

When her family transferred to Edwards Air Force Base in 2021, McCullough was surprised to find the installation lacked an active FCC program. Recognizing the high demand for childcare, she advocated for the program's return and soon became the base's first authorized provider. She operated solo for nearly a year before a second provider joined her. Today, Edwards boasts seven FCC homes.

Now an experienced veteran of the program, McCullough dedicates time to guiding others.

"Because I have been doing this for almost seven years, I try to help as much as I can," she said. "I can help a newer FCC provider as a mentor but also help military spouses considering becoming an FCC provider by showing them what it takes."

She is quick to note that opening a home daycare requires a specific mindset, as professional and personal spaces inextricably blend. The business transforms not just the physical layout of a house, but the daily rhythm of the entire family.

"It's important to consider all the impacts, like your kids, your husband, your mental health, your goals," McCullough said.

Her family has seamlessly navigated this blended lifestyle, fostering a nurturing environment that recently earned McCullough the 2025 Edwards FCC Provider of the Year award. The recognition is particularly meaningful because the nominations come directly from the parents she serves—and it marks her third annual Edwards' award of this kind since 2021.

For McCullough, the real prize is seeing her lessons take root in the children's daily lives.

"It's really rewarding when parents share with me that the children are applying what I have been teaching them when they are outside my house," she said. "One mother called me to say her son sings the 'Happy Birthday' song twice while washing his hands. While this seems trivial, I find it very rewarding. It gives me reassurance that what I do is making an impact, and that I'm preparing them for the future."



Col. Chris Carnduff, 412th Mission Support Group commander, surprises Matrina McCullough, a Family Child Care provider, at her home to present her with the 2025 Edwards FCC Provider of the Year award at Edwards Air Force Base, California, May 29.



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Years of command and control: 461st ACW's legacy at Team Robins



U.S. Airman with the 116th Air Control Wing, Georgia Air National Guard, marshals an E-8C Joint STARS during its last mission at Ramstein Air Force Base, Germany, Sept. 18, 2023. The JSTARS have been in service since 2002.

By Kevin Mulberger
461st Air Control Wing historian

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — The 461st Air Control Wing was activated at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, Oct. 1, 2011, by Maj. Gen. Stephen Hoog, Ninth Air Force commander, with Col. L. Dean Worley Jr., the first 461st ACW commander, at its helm. The activation occurred during the busiest time in the E-8C Joint Surveillance and Target Attack Radar System aircraft's 21-year history.

By this time, the men and women of Team JSTARS, which also included the Georgia Air National Guard's 116th ACW and Army's 138th Military Intelligence Company, had amassed over 72,000 combat hours in 10 consecutive years of deployments to Operations Enduring Freedom, Iraqi Freedom and New Dawn. Operation Unified Protector was ongoing while new home station missions were being flown for U.S. Northern and Southern Commands.

On Dec. 17, 2011, the 461st ACW flew its last JSTARS mission for Operation New Dawn by providing overwatch for the last convoy mission leaving Iraq to Kuwait. During its return to the skies over Iraq in June 2014, the E-8C JSTARS became the first manned U.S. Air Force aircraft over Iraq since 2011, supporting the fight against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. On Sept. 21, 2012, the 461st ACW was awarded its first Meritorious Unit Award for the period between Oct. 1, 2010, to March 31, 2012.

On Oct. 1, 2014, the 53rd Combat Communications Squadron was assigned to the 461st Operations Group and subsequently redesignated as the 53rd Air Traffic Control Squadron on May 1, 2015, providing the wing with the deployable air traffic control and landing systems mission.

The 461st ACW continued to provide superior command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance support, to special reconnais-

sance operations, as well as Operations Inherent Resolve and Freedom's Sentinel. On Sept. 30, 2019, the 7th Expeditionary Airborne Command and Control Squadron at Al Udeid Air Base achieved a major milestone by reaching over 113,000 combat hours flying the E-8C JSTARS supporting coalition operations throughout the Persian Gulf region.

On Oct. 22, 2021, the deputy secretary of defense certified that the Air Force identified a new capability, with sufficient capacity, to replace the current fleet of 16 E-8C JSTARS. Additionally, the president's fiscal year 2022 budget included force structure changes to promote the Air Force's future design. Those force structure changes included an initial divestiture of four E-8C aircraft in FY 2022.

On Dec. 6, 2021, Gen. Charles Q. Brown Jr., Chief of Staff of the Air Force, signed a memorandum providing guidance for the E-8C JSTARS divestment. That memorandum documented the Air Force's intent to fully divest its fleet of 16 E-8C JSTARS by the end of FY 2024. The first JSTARS aircraft, 92-3289, was retired into the 309th Aerospace Maintenance and Regeneration Group in Davis-Monthan AFB, Arizona, Feb. 10, 2022.

Over the next year and a half, the 461st ACW underwent major changes, inactivating four units, activating two new units, redesignating one unit, and realigning a group to under their wing, all while continuing the divestment of the E-8C JSTARS aircraft. One of those aircraft, tail number 00-2000, was transferred to the Museum of Aviation at Robins AFB for display.

The new units standing up within the 461st ACW were both Battle Management Control Squadrons — the 728th BMCS at Robins AFB in 2023, and the 932nd BMCS at Beale AFB, California, in 2025. These battle management control squadrons leverage increasing speed and bandwidth of modern digital communication technologies that would

allow the support of operations around the world from both Beale and Robins AFB, utilizing Department of the Air Force Battle Network capabilities such as the Air Battle Management System, Common Mission Control center, Joint Cyber Command and Control, Command and Control of the Information Environment, and Common Tactical Edge Network. This technology assists the squadrons in performing 24/7 real-time radar surveillance along with airspace deconfliction, air-refueling positioning and tactical reconnaissance.

While those units stood up, the 53rd Air Traffic Control Squadron underwent a redesignation as the 53rd Combat Air Operations Squadron, June 23, 2023. This redesignation showed the squadron's move to providing expeditionary airfield operations.

In September 2024, the 5th Combat Communications Group realigned under the 461st ACW, making the wing the Air Force's first C3 — command, control and communications — active-duty wing.

With the reorganization of the 461st Air Control Wing, they are now responsible for organizing, training and equipping a cohesive C3 unit of action. Their current mission is to prepare and deploy war-winning battle management, expeditionary communications and combat airfield operations for air components, as Air Combat Command's only contingency-focused C3 wing.

Since its activation in late 2011, the 461st ACW has earned seven Meritorious Unit Awards, four U.S. Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards, and one Air and Space Outstanding Unit Award providing combatant commanders in the Pacific, Middle East, Europe, and Southern Counter-Drug Operations with the E-8C JSTARS command and control, intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance aircraft, and the deployable air traffic control and landing systems prior to 2021.

Editor's note: The 461st

ACW's mission began during World War II and was originally known as the 461st Bombardment Group. They were the strategic

bombing campaign against German infrastructure as part of 15th Air Force. Their mission changed over the years and was deacti-

vated on March 25, 1968, then was reactivated here at Robins AFB on Oct. 1, 2011.

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78th SFS redefines readiness for ACE with joint training



U.S. Air Force photo by Lauren Boggs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — Airman 1st Class Katrina Brown, right, 78th Security Forces Squadron installation entry controller, and Senior Airman Jovencarl Abulag, 78th SFS installation entry controller, scan a room for potential threats before entering during a simulated active shooter exercise at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, May 12, 2026. Brown and Abulag worked together to clear rooms, locate victims, and report victims' locations over radio to incident command.

By Lauren Boggs
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. --

The 78th Security Forces Squadron at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, is adapting to a new era of warfighting as its Airmen train to embody the Agile

Combat Employment concept while also working with mission partners to enhance interoperability on base.

The ACE concept is meant to complicate adversary planning, improve resilience and survivability, and provide more power projection options for joint and combined force com-

manders. It does this by dispersing aircraft and using smaller, multi-capable teams to operate from forward deployed, austere locations.

"ACE has shifted our operational mindset," said Staff Sgt. Valtrice Sullivan, 78th SFS training noncommissioned officer in charge. "It demands that we pivot

from traditional installation security to combat-ready defense. To prepare for that, we've tailored our training scenarios to emphasize immediate adaptability."

With a 215-hour training program focused on law enforcement, base security and expeditionary operations, the 78th SFS is working to shift from organized, system-supported defense to bare-base, high-threat security when circumstances require it.

To cover those bases, Sullivan says the squadron layers its training, combining the mastering of foundational weapon skills, tactical communication and small unit tactics during intense exercises at Warrior and Gator Air Bases.

"We're training them to think like a team leader even as a junior Airman fresh out of the Security Forces Apprentice course," said Sullivan. "The critical skills we're teaching are all about independence, adaptability and decision making under pressure."

Mastering tactical independence relies heavily on joint interoperability. Tech. Sgt. Lawrence Wilburn, 78th SFS flight sergeant, says working with mission partners has become a critical addition to the squadron's training curriculum.

"In a real-world scenario, it would never just be security forces," said Wilburn. "We may be the first on

the scene, but our counterparts such as SWAT, fire and hazmat teams, are all organizations we work with when real-world stuff happens. If we don't train as we play, when it comes together, it'll be a mess. So, when we do these repetitions together, we not only build muscle memory, we also build partnership and understanding."

The 78th SFS regularly teams up with other Team Robins units for training. It's a method that Sullivan says enhances interagency coordination and readiness by allowing Airmen to understand their specific roles and how to communicate during emergencies.

To prepare for missions downrange, the squadron partners with the 116th Air Control Wing's Explosive Ordnance Disposal unit, the 461st ACW's 5th Combat Communications Group and the 78th Medical Group during a local pre-deployment training course.

Wilburn says the training ensures 78th SFS Airmen's readiness before they're deployed.

"We try to get them as ready as possible, because now when they go down to pre-deployment, it's more of a 'let's see if you know your stuff' versus 'let's teach you,'" Wilburn said. "We get them here for two weeks, and we try to run them through as much stuff as we can that they would poten-

tially see in a downrange setting."

On the domestic front, they're applying the same integrated mindset to base operations by teaming up with the 778th Civil Engineer Squadron Fire and Emergency Services Flight to coordinate their response for real incidents and Active Shooter Hostile Event Response exercises.

During active shooter exercises, defenders and EMS personnel work together to clear buildings, locate and extract victims, and report updates to incident command.

The 78th SFS also provides security responses to help partners like EOD and other organizations as they train.

"If any organization needs our help, we're always down to help to give good training," added Wilburn.

These cross-agency partnerships now extend beyond the gates of Robins AFB, with the 78th SFS joining in on the Houston County SWAT team's training efforts to keep their tactics sharp.

"They have monthly trainings, and they've extended the olive branch," Wilburn said. "They're showing us through a different lens. It's refreshing to get a new eye on how to do these different tactics and to build those partnerships."

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WARNER ROBINS

WR-ALC Safety Office enhances readiness through proactive measures

By Joseph Mather
78th Air Base Wing

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. --

The Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex Safety Office enhances readiness and worker safety by encouraging employees to identify and mitigate workplace hazards through the Voluntary Protection Program.

Johnathan McWhorter, 559th Aircraft Maintenance

Squadron sheet metal mechanic, introduced an off-the-shelf battery powered sheet metal cutter, called a nibbler, to improve safety during maintenance operations.

According to McWhorter, the nibbler is a compact, brushless tool that provides clean cuts on 10-gauge steel and up to ¼-inch aluminum.

"By replacing traditional abrasive cutting wheels, the

nibbler eliminates hazardous airborne particulates," he said. "This removes the need for heavy protective gear like respirators and Tyvek suits and prevents work area quarantines."

Danielle Finch, the WR-ALC Voluntary Protection Program Manager, stated that VPP is an Occupational Safety and Health Administration program supported by Air Force Materiel Command.

The complex's safety office manages the program, using it as a framework advocated by the Department of War to integrate safety into daily operations. VPP principles are practiced across all participating groups to reduce risk and lost time.

"Achieving OSHA's VPP approval signifies a deep commitment to workplace safety and health that goes beyond basic compliance, fostering a culture of continuous improvement and employee involvement," Finch said.

Combined with the implementation of VPP, the Safety Office uses the Air Force Safety Management System, built on four pillars: policy and leadership, risk management, assurance, and promotion and education. Additionally, the Environmental, Safety and Occupational Health Council provides a governance structure for senior leadership to drive compliance and risk reduction.

"Ultimately, these combined efforts directly support the mission," Finch said. "By ensuring the worker has a safe environment, increasing touch time by reducing incidents and damages, mitigating hazards, and increasing awareness, we satisfy our customers and we support the warfighter."



U.S. Air Force photo by Joseph Mather

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- Johnathan McWhorter, right, and Hunter Meeks, both 559th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron sheet metal mechanics, use an off-the-shelf battery powered sheet metal cutter, called a nibbler, at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, April 29, 2026. The Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex Voluntary Protection Program and Safety Team worked with the 559th AMXS to validate and verify the use of the nibbler, which provides fast, clean cuts, replacing abrasive cutting wheels and eliminating hazardous airborne particulates.



U.S. Air Force photo by Joseph Mather

John Smith, 559th Aircraft Maintenance Squadron Voluntary Protection Program safety representative, gathers metal shavings from an off-the-shelf battery powered sheet metal cutter, called a nibbler, at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, April 29, 2026. This tool was submitted to VPP for formal validation and verification to cut metal, which enhances maintenance safety and streamlines manufacturing workflows by reducing noise and collecting shavings directly into a bag to eliminate dust and debris.

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