

The Houston Home Journal

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Weekend, July 11, 2026

Summer heat is on!

Sheriff's Office urges drivers to slow down in heightened enforcement next week

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

Expect increased traffic enforcement next week as the summer heat continues.

From July 13-18, the Houston County Sheriff's Office is participating in Operation Southern Slow Down, a regional campaign in conjunction with the Governor's Office of Highway Safety.

Drivers can expect heightened speeding enforcement throughout the county, the sheriff's office said on social media.

According to GDOT data, Houston County has seen 63 fatal crashes from 2021 to 2025, 12 linked to excessive speed.

In the same time period, crashes led to just over 8,200 injuries, 563 linked to excessive speed.

On Facebook, the sheriff's office urged everyone to "slow down, buckle up, eliminate distractions, and keep our roads safe."



HHJ Archive

Jack in the Box set to open in Perry this fall

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

coast fast-food chain Jack in the Box is set to open in Perry within months, marking its first location in

Middle Georgia. Jack in the Box offers a wide variety of typical foods
See JACK page 2A



Sandra Hernandez/HHJ

Jack in the Box is anticipated to open in September at 262 Perry Parkway in Perry.



Sandra Hernandez/HHJ

Interfor is located at 903 Jernigan Street.

Interfor's log trucks, dust output, discussed at most recent Perry city council meeting

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

PERRY — City leaders had an off-agenda discussion on complaints over logging trucks and dust pollution from a local sawmill during Perry's city council meeting on Tuesday, July

7. City Manager Robert Smith said that the city and Interfor are currently making a list of alternative roads. The Perry Police Department will enforce that list.

At the end of the pre-council meeting, Smith said the city has gotten complaints from both public works

employees and residents regarding fugitive dust at Interfor, a lumber company on Jernigan Street near the Moody and Associates Law Office.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency, fugitive dust is a

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PERIODICAL

Nine schools in Houston County do not qualify for free meals



Sandra Hernandez/HHJ

Houston County Board of Education approved to increase prices at Tuesday's meeting, affecting nine schools that don't qualify for universal free meals.

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

HOUSTON COUNTY — School breakfasts and lunches for nine schools in the Houston County School District will get a little bit more expensive in the upcoming school year.

Mossy Creek Middle, Bonaire Elementary, Bonaire Middle School, Bonaire Primary, Houston County High School, Kings Chapel Elementary, Matt Arthur Primary, Matt Arthur Elementary and Veterans High School are set to see increased meal prices after a Board of Education vote to approve the price increase at their July 7 meeting.

The agenda said the district is required to set student meal prices in accordance with federal requirements under the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of

2010. Student breakfast prices will increase from \$2 to \$2.25. Elementary school lunch will increase from \$2.75 to \$3.25. Middle and high school lunch will increase from \$3 to \$3.25.

Adult and visitor breakfast and lunch prices will increase to \$3 and \$6, respectively.

But at several schools across the county, every student eats for free. Thirty-one of the county's 40 schools qualify for the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP).

According to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), CEP is a federal free-meal service option for schools in low-income areas. Schools qualify based on the percentage of students who participate in other programs such as SNAP or Medicaid.

See MEALS page 3A

Word of the Day

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

— 1 Corinthians 15:57 (NKJV)

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A division of The Georgia Trust for Local News

THE INSIDE

County Commissioners recognize America's 250th, Daughters of the American Revolution

By **OWEN JONES**
HHJ Staff Writer
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PERRY — During the July 7 board meeting, Houston County Commissioners signed a proclamation to celebrate the United States' 250th anniversary and the local chapters of the National Daughters of the American Revolution.

In the proclamation, Houston County, General Daniel Stewart and Sukey Hart chapters of the NSDAR join to celebrate the United States' history and diversity. It also acknowledges the men and women who achieved independence 250 years ago. The proclamation celebrates American values and the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence.

Second Vice Regent of the General Daniel Stewart Chapter, Beth McLaughlin (third from right), said the DAR is thankful for the dedication. Regent of the Sukey Heart Chapter, Cynthia Davis (fourth from right), thanked the county for its commitment to preserving history and said the DAR will continue to celebrate 250 years of the United States of America.



Owen Jones/HHJ

Real estate broker ordered to pay \$1 million in restitution to Georgia homeowners

By **TYTAGAMI**
Bureau Chief
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — A real estate company that gave homeowners money in exchange for a pledge to use its services when they sold their homes decades later has been ordered to pay \$1 million to hundreds of Georgians.

MV Realty also was barred from doing business in Georgia, state Attorney General Chris Carr announced Monday.

The Florida-based real estate brokerage enrolled more than 3,300 Georgians, nearly a third of them 60 and older, in a Homeowner Benefit

Agreement.

Marketed as a free cash program, participants were given small sums if they agreed to use MV Realty's services. Carr's office said in a statement that the homeowners did not realize they were entering a 40-year agreement that would cost them at least 3% of their home value if they sold without using MV Realty as their agent. The charge also applied to property transfers and foreclosures.

"MV Realty took advantage of Georgia homeowners who were already struggling — scamming them out of their equity and putting their life sav-

ings at risk," Carr said in the statement, calling the company's actions "unconscionable."

More than 400 Georgians paid MV Realty's early termination fee, a fee that Carr said was unlawful.

Carr's office obtained a court order prohibiting MV Realty from doing business in Georgia and requiring the company to pay \$1 million in restitution for homeowners.

The company also was ordered to terminate all Memorandums of Homeowner Benefit Agreement in Georgia, which acted like a "cloud" or a lien on property records, interfering with sales, refinancings and

reverse mortgages.

The judgment stems from a 2024 lawsuit by Carr's office.

Affected homeowners will receive restitution through Carr's office. Anyone entitled to relief who has not received money can contact Carr's Consumer Protection Division online at consumer.ga.gov or by calling 404-651-8600.

This article is available through a partnership with Capitol Beat News Service, a project of the Georgia Press Association's nonprofit, tax-exempt Educational Foundation.

JACK

From page 1A

found in America, including burgers, chicken tenders, tacos, and milkshakes. They also offer breakfast. According to their website, they have breakfast combos, including a jumbo breakfast platter and a meat lovers breakfast burrito combo starting at \$13. They also have an all-day breakfast menu featuring favorites like hash browns, French toast sticks and breakfast sandwiches.

For lunch, their "What's New!" offers unique twists like the Chick-N-Tater Melt combo for \$10 and a Dr. Pepper Strawberries

and Cream shake for \$6.

The Perry location isn't the only one opening soon. A Milledgeville location is set to open in August. Hinesville is currently the only open location in Georgia.

Jack in the Box is headquartered in San Diego, California, but has since expanded throughout the country with over 2,100 locations in 22 states. It is a publicly-traded company with mostly institutional ownership, including financial investment management company BlackRock, which owns 7%, according to Fintel.

Jack in the Box Perry is anticipated to open this September at 262 Perry Parkway.

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Middle Georgia Community Action Agency, Inc.

ELBERTA HEAD START AGES 3-5

2026/2027 REGISTRATION

708 Elberta Road
Warner Robins, Ga 31093
478-929-4677
elbertahs@mgcaa.org

REQUIRED DOCUMENTATION

- Proof of Birth
- Social Security Card
- Immunization Form 3231
- Medicaid / Insurance Card
- Proof of Income / SNAP, SSI, TANF
- Well Child Check
- Dental Exam
- Ga Public Health 3300
- Verification of Income & Housing Form

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CALENDAR

Book Bag Giveaway

July 11 | 10 a.m. - 1 p.m.
205 Second Street, Elko

Shiloh Baptist Church at 205 Second Street, Elko, Georgia Sponsors an Annual Book Bag Giveaway - It's that time again.

Saturday, July 11th from 10:00 a.m. until 1 p.m.

All are welcome. Join us for fun and games.

We look forward to seeing you.

Middle Flint Board Meeting

July 16 | 4:30 p.m.
Virtual

The Middle Flint Health and Wellness Community Service Board meeting will be held virtually.

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

Blood Drive and Giveaway

July 13-17
2980 Watson Boulevard, Centerville

Shepard Community Blood Center invites the community to make a difference, with a little spending money. The center will host a blood drive at Galleria Mall. Donors will receive a \$50 Kroger, Walmart or Amazon gift card, which can be used for anything you need in the back to school season.

To sign up, visit donor.shepardblood.org/donor/schedules/zip, type 31028 in the "zip code" field, set your

desired date in the "start date" field, and click "search" to select the Galleria Mall and set an appointment time.

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.

Freedom 250 Art Exhibit

July 17 | 6 - 8 p.m.
736 Carroll Street, Unit 9, Perry

Summer is here, and we'd love for you to celebrate with us at the Village Louvre!

Join us for Freedom 250, a special patriotic art exhibit filled with inspiring artwork that captures the beauty, history, and spirit of America. Come spend an evening surrounded by great art, good company, and summer hospitality. Enjoy light refreshments,

meet fellow art lovers, and be among the first to view our newest collection.

Bring a friend, browse the collection, and celebrate the season with us. Whether you're looking for the perfect piece for your home or simply want to enjoy a fun evening at the gallery, we'd love to see you!

Family & Friends Day

July 19 | 10 a.m.
205 Second Street, Elko

Shiloh Baptist Church at 205 Second Street in Elko, Georgia

Invites one and all to come worship with us on our Annual Family & Friends Day on Sunday, July 19th at 10:00 a.m.

Speaker for the occasion is Rev. James Thigpen, Pastor of Christian Hope Baptist Church in Hawkinsville, Georgia.

Praise in the Park

August 1 | 10 a.m. - 2 p.m.
471 Elberta Road, Warner Robins

The Assembly invites the community to Alex Ferguson Memorial Park for a time of fun activities just in time for back to school.

The event will feature worship, free food, free school supplies & book bags, free hair cuts for children under 18 and free giveaways, prizes and drawings.

Bring your lawn chairs and join us for a great time of fellowship in the park!

For more information, contact Outreach Pastor Henry Edmondson at (478) 953-0320 or hemonson@theassembly-ga.org.

OBITUARIES

Tom Padget

Thomas Roger Padget was born on May 17, 1954, in Rochester, New York, to the late William and Helen Padget. He grew up with his brothers, Chris, Leo, Max, and the late Carl Padget.

Tom attended Troy State University, where he majored in Music Education, played the trombone, and met the love of his life, Vicki. They were married in 1978 and built a life centered on faith, family, music, and serving others.

More than anything, Tom loved Jesus with all his heart. His life reflected Christ's love through the way he cared for others, gave generously, and always made an effort to make people laugh. Whether he was in a classroom, a band room, a living room, or even a hospital room, Tom had a way of bringing joy wherever he went. He loved people well and was always ready with a joke—even if it left you scratching your head.

Tom was a devoted husband to Vicki, a loving father to Ami, Pam, and Katherine. He loved and adored his children and grandchildren and was endlessly proud of them,



and never stopped encouraging them.

He was the proud grandfather of Martin, Grace, Abigail, Christian Dietrich, Hannah Warren, C.J., Xander, Rachyl and Conner Byers, and in 2025 he became a great-grandfather to Waylon Quick.

Music was woven throughout Tom's life, and Christmas was his favorite time of the year. Beginning in 2004, he found great joy in dressing as Santa Claus, sharing laughter, making memories with children and families, and reminding others of the joy of the season.

Tom is survived by his beloved wife, Vicki; his children, Ami Warren (Jeff), Pam Byers, and Katherine (Chad) Dietrich; his grandchildren, Grace,

Martin, Abigail, Christian Dietrich, Hannah Warren, C.J., Xander, Rachel, and Conner Byers; his great-grandson, Waylon Quick; his brothers, Chris Padget, Leo Padget, and Max Padget; and many cherished nieces and nephews.

The family would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Pastor Jerry and their church family at Calvary Chapel Heartland, as well as to Dr and Mrs Avery, Susie Sample and Tom's lifelong friends from Troy State University for the love, prayers, and support they have shown throughout the years.

Tom's greatest legacy was not found in the many things he did, but in the way he loved. His faith in Jesus, his unwavering love for his family, his generous heart, and the joy he brought to others will continue to live on in everyone who was blessed to know him.

Tom's memorial service will be held on July 11th, at 1pm at Calvary Chapel Heartland., 11029 Miami Valley Rd, Fort Valley, GA 31030.

Tom was the most wonderful Santa. In honor of him, please dress in your favorite Christmas attire.

Community Calendar

Email your information to:
brianna@hhjonline.com

Houston Home Journal

1210 Washington St. Perry, GA 31069

478-987-1823

MEALS

From page 1A

Assistant Superintendent Dana Wiggins said in an interview that these nine schools have a lower percentage of students who

qualify for government assistance.

Wiggins said families at these schools may still qualify for the district's free and reduced-price lunch program based on income. The school district's nutrition program is willing to work

one-on-one with families who need assistance submitting an application.

The application can be found here: www.nlappscloud.com/Welcome.aspx?api=709f07b66c11dc26442ff85203ac875e

PERRY

From page 1A

particulate matter that enters the air without passing through a stack or duct designed to control its flow.

Fugitive dust has been linked to respiratory issues, like aggravated asthma, chronic bronchitis, emphysema and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

Smith said he and Assistant City Manager Mitchell Worthington met with Interfor's plant and operations managers and they are aware of the dust issue.

According to Smith, Interfor operates under an EPA air quality permit that specifies the amount of dust the plant can emit. Interfor claimed they are within the limits allowed by their permit. The company agreed to increase dust reduction measures.

"They are aware of the dust issue and they're going to be working to ramp up a watering situation throughout the summer and dry months to hopefully cut down on some of that," Smith said during the meeting. "They were very agreeable with working with us on that to make sure dust is not an issue for the surrounding properties."

Log trucks were also discussed during the meeting. According to Smith, there has been an increase in log trucks driving through city streets recently such as Second Street and Northside Drive.

Multiple residents spoke up during the meeting about what they describe as an increase in traffic and log trucks. One was Jim Lay, who said he realizes Interfor is an important part of the community, but he said he's noticed more traffic on Ball Street and specifically mentioned speeding.

In January 2024, a log truck tipped over when the trailer attempted to make a left turn at the intersection of Swift Street and Macon Road, according to past HHJ coverage.

Smith told Lay they are aware of an increase in traffic on roadways that are not suitable for the volume.

"We think it's a public safety issue. We're also concerned about the wear and tear on the roads. Road paving has gotten very expensive so we want to do whatever we can to reduce impacts on our roadways," Smith said.

He said city staff have discussed how to mitigate the issue, particularly trucks driving on side streets not suitable for heavy traffic.

"We would anticipate coming back to you all sometime soon with some recommendations on how to possibly restrict truck traffic on roads where trucks shouldn't be traveling and putting into place a general structure that would, hopefully, divert truck traffic through more primary [roads] like Main Street, [Perry] Parkway [and] Ball Street," he said. Interfor has been part of

the community for years. According to their website, the 128-acre log mill was acquired in March 2014 from Tolleson Ilim, a former lumber company.

Interfor is one of the largest forest products companies in the world, with locations across the country. Recent capital projects, such as dry kilns and other debottlenecking equipment, have enabled the Perry sawmill to increase production and run at full capacity.

Smith explained that the traffic volume entering the Interfor mill comes from the north side of the city. Due to interstate weight restrictions, they can only travel on Highways 41 and 341. This causes traffic on Perry Parkway.

The city hopes to mitigate that. Smith said they want to direct traffic around the Perry Parkway and Highway 341 intersection and bring them onto Main Street and Ball Street. They will also post signage to direct traffic.

The Houston Home Journal made multiple attempts to reach Interfor for comment, but did not receive a response before deadline.

Mayor and council will hold their next pre-council meeting at 5 p.m. and the regular council meeting at 6 p.m. on July 21. Everyone is invited to attend, and the agenda is available on the city's website before meetings. Both meetings are also livestreamed on YouTube.

MACON REGIONAL CRIMESTOPPERS

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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.	BETHELY, 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.	DICKERSON, DANIEL WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. BENCH WARRANT STEMMING FROM CHARGES OF THEFT BY RECEIVING STOLEN PROPERTY AND POSS. OF A FIREARM BY A CONVICTED FELON.	EMERSON, JOSHUA WANTED BY THE BIBB COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUPERIOR CT. BENCH WARRANT STEMMING FROM THE CHARGE OF POSS. OF METHAMPHETAMINE.	HARRIS, LINWOOD WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. VOP/O/C BEING POSS. OF NARCOTICS - OPIATES.
MORMILE, ANTHONY WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUP. CT. VOP/O/C BEING THEFT BY TAKING - FELONY.	MCCRARY, DIONDRE WANTED BY HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUPERIOR COURT - VOP - THEFT BY TAKING.	ROGERS, TASHA WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR AGGRAVATED ANIMAL CRUELTY.	SAUNDERS, DARYL WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR BATTERY - FAMILY VIOLENCE.
SOLOMAN, AARON WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. VOP/O/C BEING BURGLARY.	SPALDING, MARY WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR TRAFFICKING HEROIN AND MULTIPLE COUNTS OF VIOLATION OF THE GEORGIA CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES ACT.	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! Macon Regional Crimestoppers is a local non-profit serving the Bibb, Baldwin, Houston, Jones, Twiggs, 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

VIEWPOINTS

The Houston Home Journal

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Our Goal

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

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Share Your Viewpoint

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

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

Letter to the Editor

Dear Editor,

There has been much fanfare and anticipation among Americans for the celebration of the 250th year of our existence as a republic, since our birth as a nation on July 4, 1776. Over the last few months, I have read and re-read various transcripts of the Declaration of Independence.

As I read, I thought: what brilliance, what introspection, what vision the founding fathers displayed as they signed the Declaration 250 years ago. This uniquely life-changing document was unparalleled in its effect on the patriots then and us now.

As I continued to read and mentally absorb the contents of this magnificent document, I began to take a great pause. What does it mean to me, a citizen of this great country? What should it mean for did that document mean that I, a Black man, was also endowed by my creator with specific unalienable rights and that among those rights are life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness? What does it mean, some 250 years later, to me, a Black man in Houston County, Georgia?

I still acknowledge the bravery and vision of the founding fathers and their commitment to "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, but I, some 250 years later, sharply criticize our own Board of Commissioners for denying those same principles to Blacks in Houston County in 2026. 250 years later, we Blacks in Houston County are taxed without representation, as we are consistently shown that we are not wanted on this Board.

We can vote, but gaining access to positions on the Board is greatly diminished due to the at-large voting scheme used by the county, as it routinely dilutes the voting power of Blacks, as we vote for the candidate of our choice at every election cycle. 250 years later, great hypocrisy abounds on this Board of Commissioners while they bask in the light of real freedom. How long must we wait for justice? How long must I, an 80-year-old man, wait for justice?

A famous man once said, "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice." I would like to offer that it doesn't bend by itself. It will take the collective effort of Houston County citizens of goodwill, who know there are many, to change the minds of these commissioners whose political paradigms are mired in a philosophy not unlike that of the old slave-holding state of Georgia. I wonder if the citizens of this great county know that this Board is keeping 33% of its citizens from gaining the life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness as championed by the Declaration of Independence.

I am asking all citizens of goodwill in Houston County to work with me to find ways to rally the collective moral conscience of our Board of Commissioners. I do not believe all Houston Countians condone this oppressive position that is held by this Board.

Are petitions the way to go to get their attention? How do we get a measure that allows all citizens to vote on whether a district could be drawn that would enhance the chances of a Black person gaining a seat on the Board? Do the legislators have a say in this?

Warner Robins has a Black mayor and city council members; Centerville has a Black mayor and a city council member; Perry has Black representation on its council, but where is the Houston County Board of Commissioners? They are mired in antiquity! Please help me to finally bend that moral arc toward justice in Houston County.

Sincerely,
Houston Porter

Keeping things free

For reasons that only a psychologist could understand, I have created a song this week.

It's about social commentary, where keyboard warriors hide behind anonymity to tell us how government should be run. It's pointless arguing with them, but I can write a song, my first ever. So here are the lyrics and if you want to hear the song, it's on my website at kellyrburke.com.

"Keeping Things Free"
We're George and Tom, John and Ben, We've come to pay a visit again! Keep your freedom, Keep it strong... Or somebody else, will sing your song!

We gave you freedom, now here's the trick— You gotta use it... Without acting thick!

Talk it out! Shake a hand! Freedom grows, across the land!

You don't like vape shops? That's okay. Make your case— Have your say.

But don't let government draw every line, cause someday your land, may be next in line!

We're George and Tom, John and Ben, We've come to pay a visit again! Keep your freedom, Keep it strong... Or somebody else, will sing your song!

Car wash here, Car wash there, Seems like car washes everywhere! But if they're busy all day and night, maybe the market got it right.

Nail salons? You've had enough? Sometimes progress, can look kinda rough.

But if they're legal, paying their taxes, don't condemn, the whole darn pack!

We're George and Tom, John and Ben, We've come to pay a visit again! Keep your freedom, Keep it strong... Or somebody else, will sing your song!

Dollar Generals on every street? Well... folks still shop, where prices are cheap!

You don't have to like the view, but somebody's shopping... It just ain't you!

We're George and Tom, John and Ben, We've

COLUMNIST

KELLY BURKE



come to pay a visit again! Keep your freedom, Keep it strong... Or somebody else, will sing your song!

You love free speech? Well, so do we! It's Amendment Number One, you see.

But sign your name like we all did. Only wimps throw rocks, and then stay hid!

You want more woods, birds, and bees. Everybody loves pretty trees.

But if green space makes your day, maybe everybody ought to chip in and pay!

You don't like data cen-

ters' glow... Funny place, to tell us so!

You posted online, clicked "Send" with pride... Guess where that message, had to reside.

Argue loudly! Argue fair! Listen, too, While you're there.

Neighbor first— Before the fight. You just might, get something right.

We gave you a Republic to keep, Freedom yours— But it ain't cheap!

So shake a hand, Don't slam the door. That's what neighbors are for!

Ben (spoken): "And remember... King George

is always looking for a sequel."

Keep your freedom, Keep it strong... Or somebody else, will sing your song!

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.kellyrburke.com. You can email Kelly at dakellyrburke@gmail.com.



Game night: A tale of treachery and pride

Monopoly is widely recognized as the world's most popular board game. Conservative estimates say that 500 million people enjoy this tabletop pastime. Who knows how many families have been ruined and friendships destroyed with a piece landing on Boardwalk space adorned with a hotel.

A standard game of Monopoly typically lasts one to three hours, according to the rule book. One documented game however, lasted about 70 days and was certainly played by people who devoutly loved each other or severely wished to see the other die an agonizing death. Nothing, and I mean nothing, should ever last that many days.

This innocent game of property investment and driving your competition to the poor house has a long, twisted back story. It began as anti-capitalist propaganda, a way to promote wealth redistribution and oppose land owning monopolies. That

NEW SOUTHERN DAD

KYLE DOMINY



was in 1908, and people quickly realized that a game that nobody wins is not a game at all. And why wouldn't you want to be a land tycoon?

So, about a quarter of a century later, another person, who clearly had a better sense of humor and drive to make money, changed the rules of the game to glorify the very thing it was created to destroy. The Parker Brothers company bought the concept, and the rest, as they say, is history. Now there are several variations of Monopoly, even one that glorifies the cheating that many players are prone to do anyway, all with the same goal of bankrupting your opponents.

Somewhere along the way, the notion of a family game night was touted as a way for parents and children to connect with each other, probably by board game companies seeking to gain more market share in an entertainment/leisure industry that embraces all things electronic.

Regular events of families gathering around the table to enjoy a game supposedly has great benefits. It boosts cognitive development, relieves stress and creates familial bonds and routines that last a lifetime.

I love a good tabletop game, board, card or otherwise. I've spent countless hours over the years whiling away the hours

with a game, some of which become very competitive and even divulged into arguments (Note: If you are related to a college professor, never agree to a game of Trivial Pursuit, unless you like feeling stupid). However, I'm sad to report that I seldom get up from a family game night happy to have held a family game night. The depravity of man comes on full display when my children roll the dice. The desire to win, at any cost, prevails over all the manners and sensibilities I have instilled over the years. We can't get a game of checkers in, let alone a round of Monopoly.

I blame myself. I don't go easy on my offspring. What better way to teach the harshness of life than by kicking their butts at a board game? Yes, I charge full rent when they land on my hotel-developed Boardwalk square.

The game is called "Monopoly," not "be nice to your free-loading children."

We should probably take up family walks.

LIFESTYLE & FAITH

450 silent years from Malachi to Matthew

The time span between the last Old Testament book of Malachi (circa 400 B.C.) and the first New Testament book of Mathew (circa 70 A.D.) spans more than four centuries. This interval is called the "Inter-Testament" period. More specifically, from the time the prophet Malachi predicted the coming of Elijah (forerunner of Jewish Messiah) until the appearance of John the Baptist (personification of Elijah) was approximately 450 years. Since God did not speak to mankind (via scripture) during these 450 years, they are called the "Silent Years."

Although God was silent during this interval, He was active in orchestrating world history, as prophesied by Daniel: God revealed to Daniel in a dream that the Babylonian empire would fall to the Meds and Persians. And it did in 538 B.C.

Soon thereafter, King Cyrus of Persia, allowed the Jews in Babylonian captivity to return home and rebuild their nation: Zerubbabel oversaw construction of a new temple in 515 B.C. and Nehemiah spearheaded the rebuilding of Jerusalem's walls in 444 B.C.

Next it was revealed to Daniel that the Persian Empire would fall to the Greeks, which it did in 331 B.C., when Alexander the Great conquered the known world.

Finally, the Grecian empire, as it was told

PARABLES TO PONDER

BILLY POWELL



by Daniel, would fall to Rome and it did in 63 B.C. During the silent years, the Jewish people suffered through centuries of subjugation by foreign powers and longed for the promised Messiah. Yet, all the while (during silent years), God was planning to unveil the most momentous event in world history: "For in the fullness of time, God sent his son."

In Jesus' day, the 39 books of the Old Testament were accepted as scripture; however, during the 450 silent years (prior to Jesus), 18 additional sacred books were written. Collectively, they are called the Apocrypha, meaning "deuterocanonical" or secondary scripture.

These books are Tobit, Judith, Wisdom of Solomon, Baruch, Sirach (Ecclesiasticus), Letter of Jeremiah (Baruch, chapter 6), Esther additions (107 verse expansion), Prayer of Azariah and Song of Three Jews (Daniel 3:24-90), Susannah (Daniel 13), Bel and the Dragon (Daniel 14), Maccabees 1-2, the Prayer of Manasseh, Esdras (Ezra) 1 & 2, Maccabees 3-4, and

Psalm 151.

Twelve of these books (first 12 listed) were deemed inspirational by the Roman Catholic Church and are placed in its Bible between the Old and New Testaments. Protestants rejected the Apocrypha as divine scripture. So did the Jewish people.

To sum it up, God spoke to the Hebrew people from the time of Abraham in 2000 B.C. until the last Jewish prophet, Malachi, around 400 B.C., his dialogues and interactions recorded in the 39 books of the Old Testament.

After Malachi came the 450 silent years. Then, between 50 and 100 A.D., the 27 books of New Testament were written. Therefore, since the first century A.D., God hasn't spoken to mankind via the scriptures; however, according to Hebrews 1:1-2, the advent of Christ brought a new channel of communication between God and man, namely: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son."

Love is a battlefield, a full circle anniversary

Forty-eight years. That's how long my wife and I have been married as of July 7.

Forty-eight long, long, long ... "Wait," conscious says. "She's liable to read this." ... I mean "48 short and glorious years and I can't wait for 48 more."

I hate anniversaries. Worse than birthdays. Worse than Father's Day, Mother's Day, Valentine's Day ... It's not the celebration. That's something to be proud about. It's the gifts. I am the absolute worst romantic.

Case in point. This weekend we are celebrating our anniversary in Chattanooga, Tennessee. That is the same place we went to for our honeymoon. Only... we spent our free time driving/walking through Chickamauga Battlefield and learning about the pivotal Civil War battles in 1863 and Missionary Ridge. (Now you know the meaning behind my headline.)

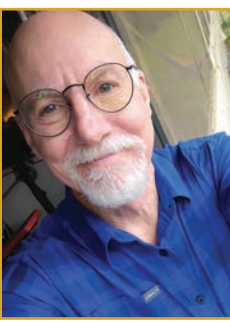
To this day I have no clue why. What was I thinking? Why that location? Why battlefields when neither one of us was - is - a history buff? (Maybe because they were free and I was a grocery store stocker making pennies?) Why? Why? Why? And now we're here again and I'm expected to this time make it romantic.

"Come here honey. Give us a little kiss!" (While standing on the grave of James Andrews, a Kentucky civilian who led the "Great Locomotive Chase" behind Confederate lines in 1862.)

"Hey baby. I still only have eyes for you!" (While standing on the grave of Private Oliver Protsman, a Civil War soldier who had a bullet pass so close to his face it

HHJ PUBLISHER

DON MONCRIEF



created a vacuum effect and sucked out his eye.)

"I'm all yours!" (While standing on the grave of Lewis Martin who lost his right arm and leg in a mine explosion.) (Yes, that was tawdry and trashy, even for me.)

Back to gifts.

They say you can never go wrong with flowers. "They," I presume, are the people who've never been married and have never given flowers year after year after year ...

Amazon recommends I give her a coffee cup that reads: "Annoying each other for 48 years" or a candle that reads: "Holy ___! We're still married. I mean, happy anniversary." (I kind of like the coffee cup.)

Uncommon goods recommends I give her a "Anniversary Journal". (Are they crazy! I'm trying my best to get her to forget about half the things I do wrong and they want her to write them all down in a journal, so she'll remember forever!)

Etsy recommends a silver spoon (if I ever make it to 50, at least I know what precious metal it's got to be made of) etched with: "To a lifetime of ice cream together." (Hello. She's lactose intolerant!)

The Knot recommends matching underwear. (We have matching pajamas.)

Openmityromance recommends custom bobbleheads of each of us. (My head bobbles naturally when she hits me with a frying pan.)

Recommendation after recommendation after recommendation. But what do you get a woman who knows you would, and for the most part could, buy her anything she wants and yet she is just not into material possessions?

What do you get a woman who has loved you - and you know "you" and you know how hard it is to love "you" - for 48 years (plus two in high school, so we are actually at 50)? A woman who has made thousands and thousands of sacrifices for you. Given up dreams for you. Been tolerant of you when you've acted like a child when the Braves don't win (which as you know has been a lot lately). Who has always been there, through the thick and thin, through the good times and the bad times.

A woman who has given you four beautiful children. Children she made sure were raised right!

I mean. A Godly woman! A woman of courage! A woman of perseverance! A woman of strength! Loyalty!

What do you give her? Don't ask me. Aside from my true love and admiration and sense of awe, I fall short every year.

The shimmering story of shiny Carnival glass

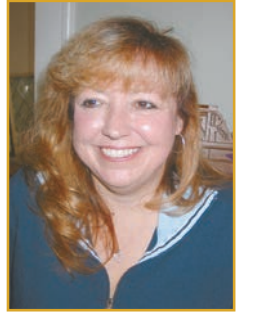
Carnival glass, with its captivating iridescent shimmer, wasn't always a prized possession. Initially dubbed "poor man's Tiffany," this pressed glass was mass-produced in the early 20th century, often given as carnival prizes. However, its affordability and ability to brighten homes quickly made it a household staple.

Born from Fenton Art Glass Company's "Iridill" line in 1908, carnival glass mimicked the luxurious look of blown iridescent glass, but at a fraction of the cost. Metallic salts applied during production created its signature sheen. While popular in the 1920s, production waned in the 1930s, though it has seen occasional resurgences.

The glass came in a rainbow of colors, with "marigold," a vibrant orange-

ALL ABOUT ANTIQUES

JILLINDA FALEN



gold, being the most common. Collectors prize rarer hues and variations, like those with a moonstone or milk glass base. Beyond color, the shapes and patterns of carnival glass are incredibly diverse, ranging from simple bowls to elaborate figurative pieces. Manufacturers like Fenton, Northwood, and Imperial churned out countless designs, leading to fierce competition and a vast array of patterns. Even international companies like Crown Crystal (Australia) and Sowerby

(England) contributed unique designs.

Today, carnival glass is a sought-after collectible. While common pieces can be found in antique stores and online marketplaces, rare examples can fetch impressive prices.

Identifying these shimmering treasures can be tricky, as many pieces lack maker's marks. Collectors often rely on pattern matching, color analysis, and other clues to uncover the history behind each piece of this captivating glass. Happy Collecting!

How my daily stroll helps me

My relationship with the outdoors has always been complicated.

I have always been a girl who happens to have indoor hobbies. I like reading, writing and drawing, things that are great to do on a computer or in a notebook while you're comfortable inside. I wasn't a fan of either the unbearable heat or the chilling cold, and I certainly didn't want to be anywhere near insects.

But when I was younger, I loved going to the playground, riding a scooter or swimming in the pool. It wasn't like I was afraid of going outside, it just didn't suit my hobbies most of the time.

There was only one small problem with that. I definitely still needed exercise. I would often be encouraged to go outside when I was young to get sunshine. I never stayed out for long though, since I would get tired of it rather quickly. But even I knew that sitting around in a house all day wasn't exactly good for my health.

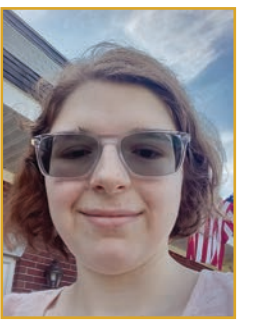
So, I would try lots of different things to enjoy the outdoors. I'd play outside games with friends and go mess around on a playground. It was absolutely just to satisfy my boredom when I was young, but as I got older, it was a good way to get my thoughts out. My brain has a tendency to run around in circles when it comes to a train of thought, and exercise was an oddly great way to satisfy it.

But then I entered teenagehood. A lot of things I enjoyed when I was younger gradually became less interesting to me. I didn't ride my scooter, and my friends became interested in other things. It was just a part of growing up, so that wasn't unusual.

However, most would say 2020 was a very unusual time. My free time outside

DEAR DIARY

ANNA CARTER



was all but murdered by quarantine. If I did anything fun outside at all, it would be on my own or with my siblings.

2020 passed, and eventually the pandemic did too, but now I had no idea what to do. It felt like I had been shoved from one stage of life to the other, and I wasn't sure what I should be doing.

With the lack of things to do, I stuck inside for a while. But of course, that wasn't healthy. As a part of my schoolwork, my mom assigned me to walk outside for a half hour each school day. Nowadays, that sounds easy, and it still was easy when I started doing it, but it didn't stop me from feeling like it was taking forever. Back then, it felt pointless. I would just be walking around a neighborhood I'm already familiar with.

At some point, things changed. I realized how fast I was experiencing life, and how much stress that was putting me through. There are so many things that convince you to rush through it all, but it wasn't healthy for me.

When I started growing a deeper connection to God, I oddly began to appreciate walking more. I started taking strolls on the weekends when I wasn't required to at all. It wasn't long before I realized walks were a good outlet for stress and the thoughts that keep wheeling around.

My walking time actually doubled from a half-hour to an hour, and sometimes I would want to go for longer than that! These strolls

were so peaceful that I started enjoying the simple fact of being outside and experiencing life.

Now that I work at an office, I appreciate walking so much more. I've done a complete 180 on my opinion of the subject.

I've got to tell you, the simple act of walking around for a short bit of time a day has done me wonders. I feel so much more relaxed. It feels like a time when I don't get caught up in distractions that pull me away from life. I've made prayers during my walks, which always feel beautiful. I got earbuds so I could listen to fun music tracks that add to my experience. The simple act of seeing people I know makes me feel so much better. It has absolutely helped me with my exercise and stamina too.

I know I'm just telling you a story about strolls, and it all seems so simple, but oddly enough, the things I remember most about life are often the simplest.

I think everyone should take the time to do a little something outside. That's a statement I never thought I would say as a young teenager, but here I am. It doesn't even have to be a walk. It can be a bicycle ride, planting flowers, or relaxing on a porch.

Taking time to be present is so important nowadays in a world that is always vying for your attention. I think it's good to give these little stories as reminders to appreciate God's beauty around us.

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ENTERTAINMENT



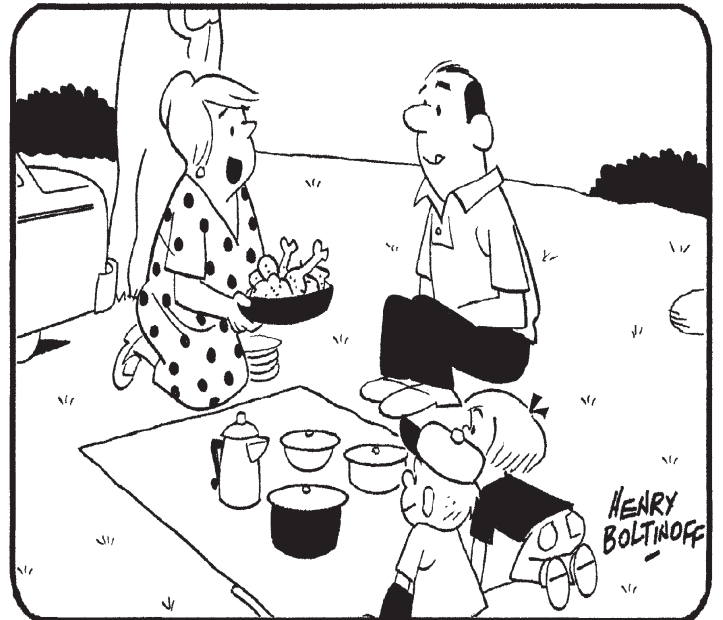
Out on a Limb

by Gary Kopervas



HOCUS-FOCUS

BY HENRY BOLTIKOFF

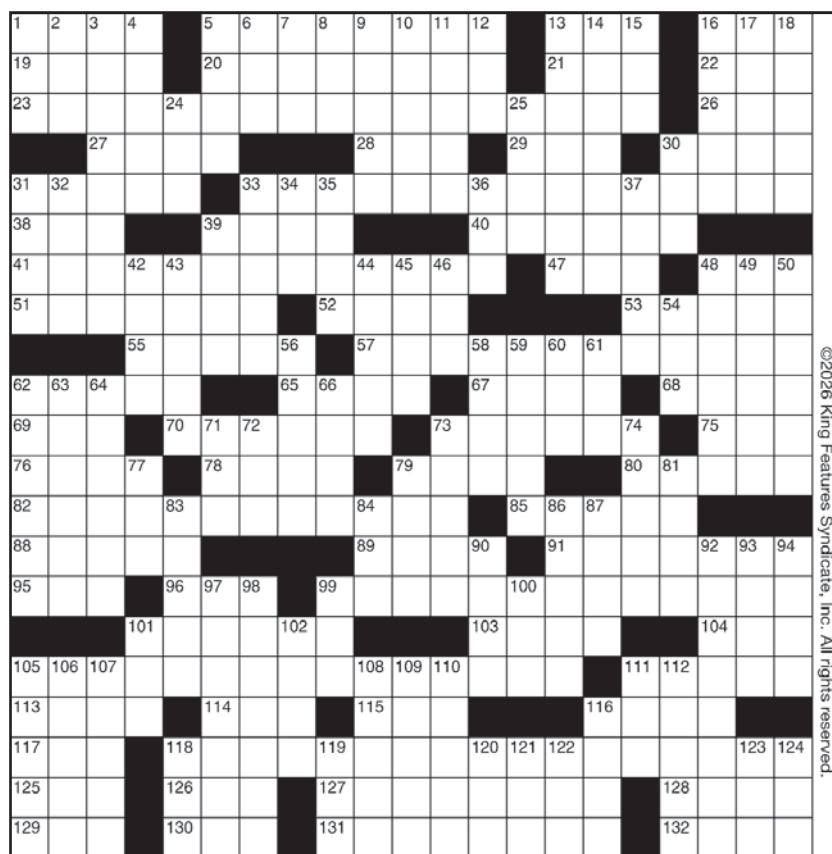


Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Pocket is missing. 2. Ear is different. 3. Handle is added to pot. 4. Leg is moved. 5. Bush is smaller. 6. Blanket is smaller.

CROSSWORD 7-11-26



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Pet plagues
- 5 Keg party dispensers
- 13 Iranian city with a 1,200,000+ population
- 16 Brainpower stats
- 19 Cries of awe
- 20 Having hay fever, say
- 21 Italian "a"
- 22 Bring to court
- 23 More proficient than anybody else
- 26 Tchr.'s union
- 27 Figure skating leap
- 28 Sauna setting
- 29 Photo lab blowup: Abbr.
- 30 Barbie or Ken
- 31 "He wouldn't hurt --"
- 33 Fairly often
- 38 Kung -- chicken
- 39 Extremist sect
- 40 Female graduates
- 41 Ball hitter in a certain court
- 47 Center or glottis lead-in
- 48 Old JFK jet
- 51 Tallinn locale
- 52 -- Christian Andersen
- 53 She sang "Skyfall"
- 55 Grandma, in Italy

- 57 Sri Lankan monkey with a hatlike whorl of hair
- 62 Nosy sort
- 65 Yuletide poem opener
- 67 Skip out (on)
- 68 Business attire
- 69 French "the"
- 70 Dental buildup
- 73 Joked around
- 75 Cooler cubes
- 76 Competent
- 78 Gallivant
- 79 Doubt-free
- 80 Deep-seated
- 82 Cartoon short featuring a bird who was a precursor to Tweety
- 85 Lamp cover
- 88 Sheer
- 89 Goopy cheese
- 91 Designer with the fragrance Lucky Wish
- 95 Quaint suffix with poet
- 96 Reply to "Are you?"
- 99 Dropping extra work and "acting your wage"
- 101 Wicca's realm
- 103 Jethro -- (rock band)
- 104 Excavate
- 105 NHL team that became the Colorado Avalanche

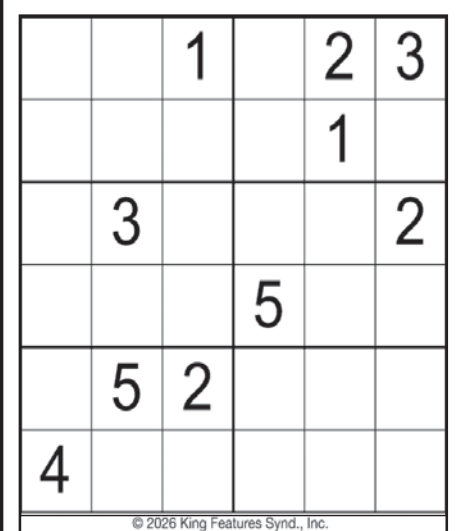
- 111 Saintliness
- 113 Draws upon
- 114 Nutrition fig.
- 115 Debt memo
- 116 Tear apart
- 117 -- Lady of Fatima
- 118 Algebraic statement graphed as a parabola
- 125 Bi- plus one
- 126 Poet's dusk
- 127 Counterpart of digital (Var.)
- 128 Norway port
- 129 Kong, for one
- 130 1950s prez
- 131 Actor Clint
- 132 "Sheesh, close call!"

CLUES DOWN

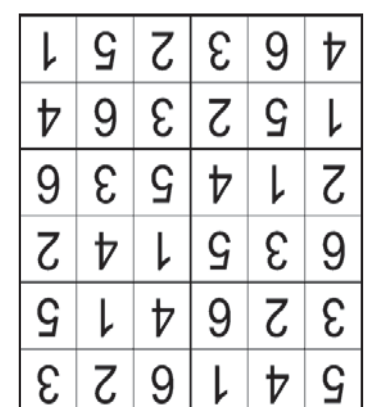
- 1 Hitter Gehrig
- 2 Tiny particle
- 3 "Calm down!"
- 4 Suffix similar to "-ish"
- 5 Joan of folk
- 6 Letter after kay
- 7 English cathedral city
- 8 Necessary: Abbr.
- 9 Have faith in
- 10 Visibly awed
- 11 Relative of risotto
- 12 -- -fi
- 13 Latin for "five"
- 14 A single block of sugar, say
- 15 Irate
- 16 Playground comeback
- 17 Subdue
- 18 Serta rival
- 24 Stage actress Hagen
- 25 Have a hunch
- 30 Genetic stuff
- 31 Vaulted church area
- 32 E-help pages
- 33 Sacred book of Islam
- 34 Suffix with form
- 35 Hanker (for)
- 36 Disloyal type
- 37 Seminal '40s computer
- 39 Goatee spot
- 42 Top-shelf
- 43 Pig's noise
- 44 Doha locale
- 45 Pizza chain, informally
- 46 Atty.'s title
- 48 Costume spangle
- 49 Channel for excess water
- 50 Move like a seesaw
- 54 Govt. lawyers

- 56 "Shaq --!" (O'Neal memoir)
- 58 Lyft rival
- 59 Makes lighter
- 60 Sch. close to Harvard
- 61 Heady drink
- 62 Dental buildup
- 63 Disproves
- 64 Land specks in the sea
- 66 Bank bought by Chase in 2008, in brief
- 71 Financier Onassis
- 72 "Apollo 13" director Howard
- 73 Andrews of "Mary Poppins"
- 74 Failed to
- 77 Dallas-to-Nashville dir.
- 79 Assistant on iDevices
- 81 Uncluttered
- 83 In a -- (very quickly)
- 84 -- Dhabi (emirate)
- 86 Schleps
- 87 Deep blue dye
- 90 Dying rebuke from Caesar
- 92 Course part, in an eatery
- 93 Course part, in school
- 94 -- Azalea ("Fancy" rapper)
- 97 Like built-up interest
- 98 Ordinary
- 99 Div. of an NBA game
- 100 "-- Sera, Sera"
- 101 Drs. who deliver babies
- 102 Washerful
- 105 Sales target number
- 106 Seize illegally
- 107 Hair-raising
- 108 Pop diva Ross
- 109 Teensy bits
- 110 Thick cover
- 111 Item in a pod
- 112 Being pulled
- 116 Regretted greatly

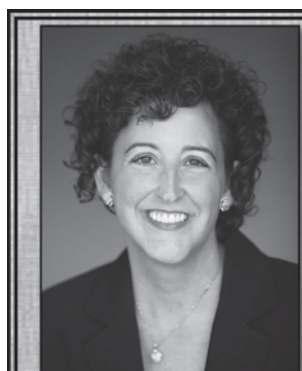
SUDOKU



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



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



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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Flint Energies Foundation surpasses \$1 million in college scholarships



Courtesy: Flint Energies

Flint Energies representatives Tonya Mathews (far left) and Blair Brown (far right) present scholarships to Warner Robins High School seniors.

Special to The Journal
The Flint Energies Foundation is proud to announce they recently surpassed a major milestone in their commitment to education, awarding more than \$1 million in college scholarships since launching the scholarship program in 2015.

Since the program began, the Foundation has awarded scholarships to hundreds of students attending colleges and universities nationwide.

"This milestone reflects the incredible impact that education can have on individuals, families and communities," says Joanne Hamlin, Flint Energies Foundation Chair. "Surpassing more than \$1 million in scholarships awarded is not only a celebration of the Foundation's mission, but also of the students whose determination and achievements continue to inspire us."

This year, Flint Energies and the Flint Energies Foundation awarded scholarships to 75 local students in Flint's service territory who are pursuing a degree at a four-year college or university. Winners were awarded \$2,500 each, totaling \$187,500.

Houston County scholarship winners are as follows:

- General Foundation Scholarship Winners:
- Chandler McKenzie - Perry
 - Alyssa Paredes - Centerville
 - Allison Kirk - Warner Robins

- Harsh Patel - Bonaire
- Ella Wright - Kathleen
- Tim Germain - Kathleen
- Kate Lane - Perry
- Michelle Jones - Kathleen
- Caroline Papczynski - Warner Robins
- Haley Register - Kathleen
- Aiden Hayes - Warner Robins
- Bryan Nguyen - Warner Robins
- Stevie Sheffield - Warner Robins
- Knox Nicholls - Warner Robins
- Olivia Herzog - Perry
- Sarah Golden - Perry
- Alea Hand - Warner Robins
- Erin Miller - Bonaire
- Bailey Barnes - Perry
- Daquan Carswell - Warner Robins
- Adrian Ooi - Warner Robins
- Tyler Knight - Bonaire
- Jackson Eubanks - Kathleen
- Tyler Lavalley - Bonaire
- Andrew Bragg - Bonaire
- Brooke VanDallinda - Kathleen
- Micah Daniel - Bonaire
- Ava Mason - Kathleen
- Jackson Pritchett - Warner Robins
- Joseph Strong - Bonaire
- Rabun Perdue - Kathleen
- Taylor Coley - Perry
- Jammesha Wright - Warner Robins
- Caden Hilton - Bonaire
- Zane Bankston - Warner Robins
- Jadakiss Adside - Warner Robins
- Camden Williamson - Perry

- FFA-4H Foundation Scholarship Winners:
- Kaleb Green - Vienna
- Aly Corzine - Kathleen
- Jeanna Osborne - Perry
- Camdilyn Watkins - Warner Robins
- Maggie Bell - Perry
- Olivia Wood - Bonaire
- Skye Blitch - Warner Robins
- Washington Youth Tour Scholarship Winners
- Prisha Amin - Centerville
- Emily Godwin - Warner Robins
- Claire Jefferson - Warner Robins

The Flint Energies Foundation selected the scholarship winners through an anonymous process based on a written essay, financial need and the applicant's commitment to community. The Flint Energies Foundation Scholarship is limited to students whose primary residence is within one of the 17 counties served by Flint Energies: Bibb, Chattahoochee, Crawford, Dooley, Harris, Houston, Macon, Marion, Monroe, Muscogee, Peach, Schley, Sumter, Talbot, Taylor, Twiggs and Upson. The scholarship program was established in 2015 with the help of abandoned capital credits to encourage and assist in the educational pursuits of students living within Flint's service area.

Applications for the 2027 Flint Energies Foundation Scholarships will be available at flintenergies.com/scholarships in January 2027.

BBB Alert: Protecting your home from title transfer fraud

Most homeowners worry about break-ins, storm damage, or costly repairs. Few realize that criminals may be able to steal a home without ever setting foot on the property.

Title transfer fraud—sometimes called deed fraud or home title theft—occurs when scammers use stolen personal information and forged documents to fraudulently transfer property ownership. Once ownership records are altered, criminals may attempt to take out loans against the property's equity or even sell the property to an unsuspecting buyer.

While any property can be targeted, criminals often target properties that may be less actively monitored, such as vacant homes, rental properties, vacation homes, or homes owned outright without a mortgage. Once fraudulent ownership documents are recorded, the scammer may attempt to borrow against the property's equity or sell the property to an unsuspecting buyer.

While this type of fraud is relatively uncommon, it appears to be growing, and the financial consequences can be devastating. Because many victims don't discover the fraud until significant damage has been done, regular monitoring is critical.

Here are some of the warning signs your Better Business Bureau (BBB) recommends you watch for:

- Unexpected mail regarding mortgages, loans, or liens you did not authorize.
- Property tax notices that stop arriving or begin showing unfamiliar information.
- Notices regarding changes in ownership, deeds, or recorded documents.
- Collection notices related to debts secured by your property.
- Individuals inquiring about purchasing or viewing property you are not selling.
- Unfamiliar activity appearing in public property



KELVIN COLLINS

The sooner suspicious activity is identified, the easier it may be to address.

Here are several proactive steps that our team at BBB suggests to help you reduce your risk of becoming a victim of title transfer fraud:

Protect your personal information. Many title fraud schemes begin with identity theft. Secure sensitive documents, use strong passwords, and be cautious about sharing personal information online or in response to unsolicited requests.

Monitor your property records periodically. Many county Register of Deeds offices provide online access to public records, allowing homeowners to verify that ownership information remains accurate.

Review financial and tax-related correspondence carefully. You don't want to ignore unexpected notices from lenders, tax authorities, or government agencies. Be sure to contact their office at a verified number if you receive anything indicating your property deed has been compromised.

Consider freezing your credit. A credit freeze can make it more difficult for criminals to open new accounts using your information.

Homeowners should also periodically review public property records to ensure ownership information remains accurate.

Many counties have launched a property alert system that notifies users when

ever a document is recorded that matches their registered name, business name, or property address. This service can provide an early warning if suspicious activity appears in county records.

Here are steps we recommend if you suspect you're the victim of title transfer fraud:

Contact your local county clerk's office and request copies of any suspicious documents. File a report with local law enforcement. Report identity theft through the Federal Trade Commission's IdentityTheft.gov website. Our BBB also recommends notifying financial institutions and placing fraud alerts or freezes on your credit reports if personal information may have been compromised.

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred directly to the BBB at Phone: 1-800-763-4222, Web site: BBB.org or E-mail: info@centralgeorgia.bbb.org

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STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS FOR THE WEEK 7/12/26

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Former Bears are potential draftees in Major League Baseball draft, Northside athlete announces transfer to Perry

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

Two former Houston County Bears may have their name called this weekend during the 2026 Major League Baseball draft.

Drew Burress, a sophomore at Georgia Tech, headlines the pair after another award-winning season for the Yellow Jackets. Recently graduated shortstop Isaiah Galason is also eligible for the draft.

Burress started all 61 games for Tech during the 2025-26 season, posting a .358 batting average for 91 hits, 22 doubles, three triples, 16 home runs and 60 RBI.

He was selected to the 2025 All-American 1st Team by the National Collegiate Baseball Writers Association, the American Baseball Coaches Association, the College Baseball Foundation, Perfect Game and D1 Baseball. He earned 3rd Team honors for Baseball America.

Additionally, in 2024 and 2025 Burress was selected to the U.S.A. Baseball Collegiate National Team, was a Golden Spikes Award Semifinalist, a Dick Howser Award Semifinalist, on the All-Atlantic Coast Conference 1st Team and the Atlantic Coast Conference All-



Drew Burress (right) slaps five with Hunter Chiapetta (left) as he crosses home plate in the playoffs against Buford.

Academic team among a plethora of other awards.

The MLB has Burress listed as the seventh-best prospect in the 2026 draft.

Galason, a Georgia Tech commit, is Perfect Game's 169th-best MLB prospect. The middle infield stand-out earned All-Region 1st Team honors his senior year after helping lead HoCo to the semifinals in 2026. He won a state championship with the 2022-23 team, had another state championship appearance in 2025 and made it to the semifinals in 2024.

According to the MLB

rules, players who have graduated high school but not attended college are eligible for the draft. If Galason attends Georgia Tech, he will not be eligible again until completing his junior year or turning 21 years old.

There are four former Bears currently in the MLB: Andrew Dunford, DL Hall, Gage Harrelson and Jaden Woods.

Former Northside athlete transfers to Perry

Rising sophomore wide receiver Justin Garman has transferred from Northside High School, to

Perry High School, according to the Panthers' Hudl roster and Garman's social media accounts.

The former Eagle earned an All-Region 2nd Team selection in the first year under new head coach Daniel Williams.

Garman adds another receiver to what was an inexperienced room in 2025. He joins Dakarai Felder and Brhyson Gordon to help replenish a unit that lost three of its top five producers to graduation.

Issy Dehem earns All-State honors



Issy Dehem (22) moves in for a header while Brookwood's goalkeeper (1) runs out for the challenge.



J.D. Garman (10) brings down a 40-yard reception with an Eagle's Landing defensive back in coverage.

Westfield's prolific goal scorer, Issy Dehem, earned GIAA 3A All-State honors for her performance during the 2026 season, according to The Westfield School Facebook page.

Dehem tied her own single-season goals record at 32 with a strike in the Lady Hornets' final game of the season against Brookwood, an eventual 4-3 loss in double overtime.

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