

The Houston Home Journal

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‘This is us doing our homework’

Warner Robins Council approves data center moratorium for six months



Brieanna Smith/HHJ

Councilman Keith Lauritsen (left) and Mayor LaRhonda Patrick (right) speak during a City of Warner Robins council meeting on Monday, July 20.

By BRIEANNA SMITH
HHJ Managing Editor
brieanna@hhjonline.com

WARNER ROBINS — The Warner Robins City Council has officially paused data center development.

At a city council meeting on July 20, the council unanimously approved a temporary six-month moratorium on data centers. According to council documents, the moratorium pauses acceptance, processing, or issuing new applica-

tions for zoning, building permits, business licenses or conditional use permits related to constructing, establishing or expanding a data center. The moratorium remains in effect until January 2027.

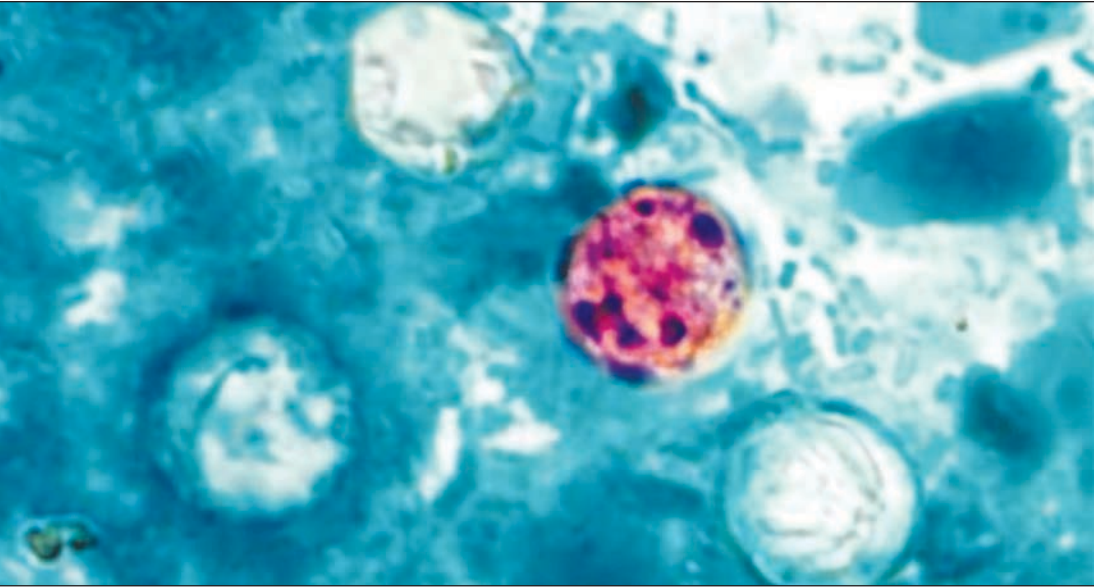
Citizens raised concerns about AI, costs to taxpayers, and community impact during the meeting. Warner Robins resident Andrew Davidson spoke at the meeting about data centers used for artificial intelligence.

As he described, and according to prior HHJ coverage, AI training models (like Gemini and ChatGPT) use thousands of graphics processing units (GPUs) housed in a data center building to perform calculations faster and more

efficiently than central processing units (CPUs). “If a normal computer processor is like one brilliant engineer solving one problem after another, a GPU is like thousands of

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Local expert provides insight into cyclospora outbreak



Courtesy: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

A Cyclospora outbreak has been identified in four states, but cases in Georgia have not been linked to the outbreak, says a local epidemiology director.

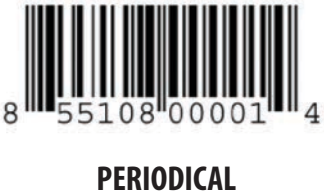
By SANDRA HERNANDEZ
HHJ Staff Writer
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HOUSTON COUNTY — Lettuce has been at the forefront of the American public’s mind due to Cyclospora cases across 41 states, including Georgia. Ben O’Neil, an epidemiology director with Georgia’s Department of Health North Central Health District in Macon, explained the outbreak and how it currently affects the state. Cyclospora causes a condition called cyclosporiasis, an illness from eating contaminated food or drinking contaminated water, according to the FDA. It

causes diarrhea, cramping and other symptoms. According to O’Neil, unlike other foodborne illnesses that may last for days, the symptoms from Cyclospora can last for weeks. He explained there is an uptick in foodborne diseases typically during the summer months, including cyclospora. It is a parasite that is generally transmitted when infected feces contaminate food or water. “It has to do with the environment, the heat. It’s just ideal for them,” he said in an interview. The Georgia Department of Public Health says reported cases of cyclo-

sporiasis have increased since 2015. This is due to a change in laboratory testing practices. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, as of July 13, 4,000 people have become sick, with fewer than 100 cases in Georgia. There have been outbreak cases reported in four states: Michigan, Ohio, West Virginia and Kentucky. There have been 31 to 80 cases in Georgia since May 1, none associated with the ongoing outbreak. Cases are in middle Georgia, but not associated with the outbreak, O’Neil said.

See OUTBREAK page 3A



PERIODICAL

Perry council approves Middle Georgia Regional Commission to take on comprehensive plan

By SANDRA HERNANDEZ
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PERRY — The city’s comprehensive plan is seeing a shift as Perry council approved for the

Middle Georgia Regional Commission to complete the project, canceling its contract with previous consulting firm TSW. During the meeting on Thursday, July 21, a public hearing on the comprehen-

sive plan was originally scheduled, but due to this transition with the MGRC, it will be rescheduled to a later date. According to the agenda,

See PERRY page 7A



Sandra Hernandez/HHJ

Mayor Randall Walker and council hear from Laura Mathis, Middle Georgia Regional Commission Executive Director, during the July 21 council meeting.



Owen Jones/HHJ

Houston County 911 Center’s welfare check system calls participants at a scheduled time. If there is no response, law enforcement follows up.

How Houston County’s 911 Center’s new wellness check system works

By OWEN JONES
HHJ Staff Writer
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HOUSTON COUNTY — Houston County is getting an update to its wellness check system that will make it easier for vulnerable residents to get the help they

need, even when they can’t make a call for help. Wellness checks add another layer of safety for people who are either elderly, live alone, or have medical concerns. That’s why the Houston County 911

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Word of the Day

Let love be without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil. Cling to what is good. — Romans 12:9 (NKJV)

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A division of The Georgia Trust for Local News

LOCAL & STATE

Historic photo recalls 1994 flood during Tropical Storm Alberto



Floodwaters from Tropical Storm Alberto cross Highway 96 near the Ocmulgee River bridge in July 1994 in the photo on the left. The same stretch of Highway 96 photographed more than 30 years later on the right.

Special to The Journal
WARNER ROBINS — A photograph taken during the historic July 1994 flooding caused by Tropical Storm Alberto shows the Ocmulgee River overflowing across Highway 96

near the bridge toward the Oaky Woods Wildlife Management Area. The photographer, John Trussell, said he was with Oaky Woods manager Ray Jones, who had been stationed near Waterford Golf Club to prevent motorists

from entering the area as floodwaters approached. The pair drove to the bridge just minutes before the rising water reached the roadway. While waiting, they observed deer and wild hogs gathered along the road-

side, seeking higher ground as floodwaters advanced. According to Trussell, water first reached the edge of the pavement before slowly spilling across Highway 96. Within about 30 minutes, the entire roadway was underwater, with flood

depths eventually reaching about two feet. Trussell noted that the flooding marked the first and only time the Highway 96 roadway, built in 1955, was overtopped by floodwaters. In the modern-day photo,

a sign marking the former Waterford Golf Club property is visible on the right side of the road, and the once-open view is now lined with significantly more trees, illustrating how the landscape has changed over the past three decades.

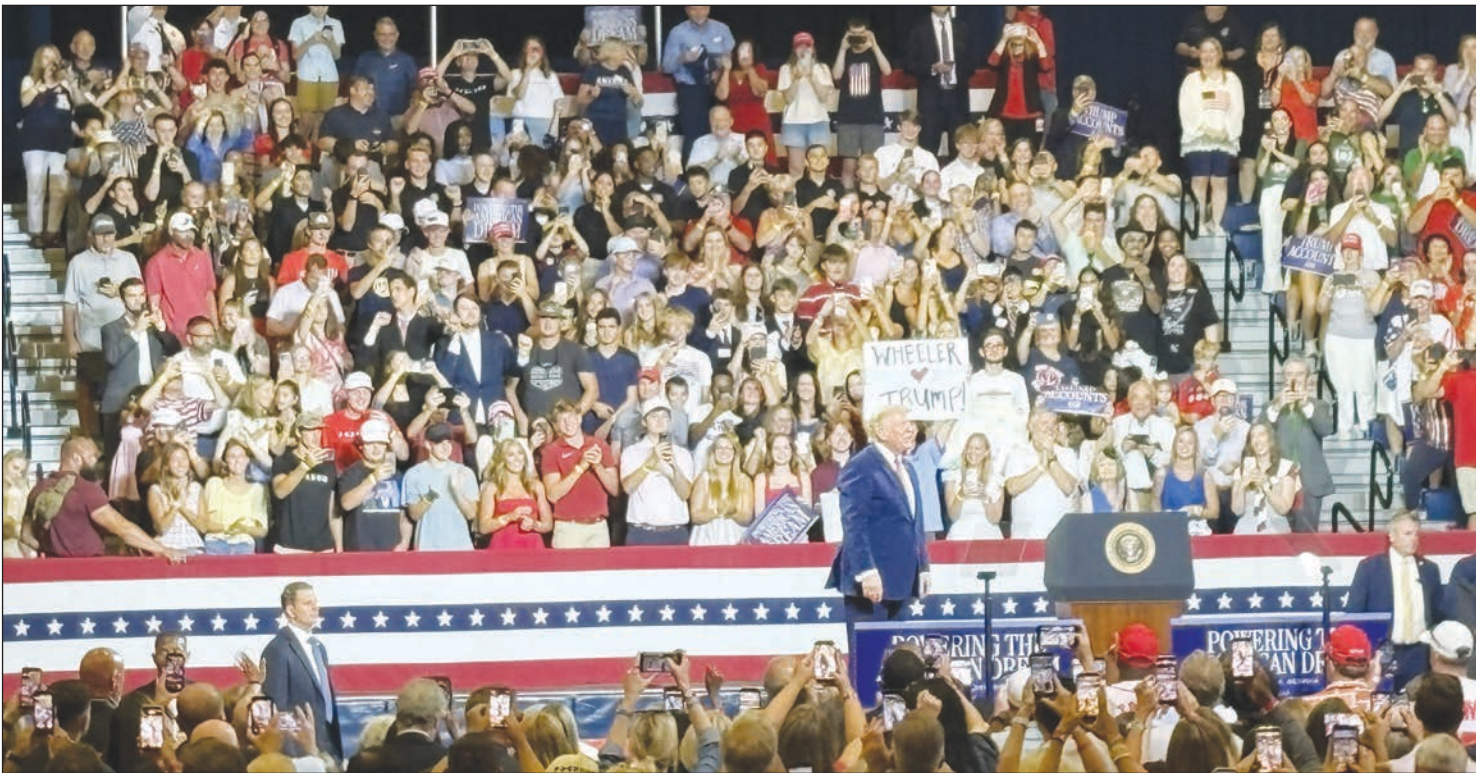
President Trump travels to Georgia to tout policies and promote GOP candidates

By TYTAGAMI
Bureau Chief
Capitol Beat News Service

ATLANTA — President Donald Trump visited Wheeler High School in Cobb County Wednesday to talk about the midterm elections, the impact of his policies on the economy and new tax-advantaged retirement accounts for children created under his administration. He also talked about what he called the "skirmish" in Iran, saying the Iranian government was not yet ready to negotiate peace. Prior to his arrival in Georgia, Trump had gone to Dover Air Force Base to salute the remains of four service members killed in the conflict. Among them was Army 1st Lt. Tyler James Feeha, whose family is from the Marietta area. Trump gave them a ride home on Air Force One, and they attended his event at Wheeler High. Trump said Iran cannot be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons. He also said Democratic victories in the midterms would pose a greater threat to the country than both world wars and the attack on Sept. 11, 2001, because, he said, Democrats want to take America toward communism. "The blue states are all going bad. They're all going bad because communism is a loser," the president said midway through his speech to an adoring crowd in the high school arena, which seats 3,000. The visit was an opportunity to promote his party ahead of the November elections. Trump has endorsed U.S. Rep. Mike Collins for U.S. Senate, with the hope of unseating Democratic U.S. Sen. Jon Ossoff. Collins skipped Trump's event, saying in a social media post that he had important votes to cast in Washington. Trump concurred from the stage, saying he ordered Collins to remain at the Capitol to vote on farming and military bills. Trump used his visit to make it clear that other candidates for state office in Georgia had his "complete

and total endorsement," including state Rep. Tim Fleming, R-Covington, who is running for secretary of state, and two state senators — Brian Strickland, R-McDonough, for attorney general, and Greg Dolezal, R-Cumming, for lieutenant governor. Trump had endorsed the current lieutenant governor, Burt Jones, during Jones' primary campaign for governor. But after Jones' loss last month to political newcomer Rick Jackson, Trump switched to the winning candidate. Trump invited Jackson onto the stage with him to talk about the retirement accounts for children, which are being called "Trump accounts."

They are available to any American under age 18, but babies born during Trump's current term will get a \$1,000 contribution from the federal government. Jackson said that if he wins against Democrat Keisha Lance Bottoms, he will urge the General Assembly to match that \$1,000. The wealthy entrepreneur pledged to fund the matching contributions out of his own pocket if the Legislature refused. Before Trump's arrival, those other candidates took the stage to tout the tax-advantaged savings accounts, which were established by the One Big Beautiful Bill Act last year and took effect on July 4. Also praising the new Trump accounts as transformational investments were U.S. Small Business Administration Administrator Kelly Loeffler, Education Secretary Linda McMahon and Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent. Trump said the accounts would grow with the stock market, expanding to hundreds of thousands of dollars in value by the time newborns become adults. But before his arrival, Bessent gave the crowd a slightly different estimate. "Millions of American youth are now able to watch their investment accounts compound in real time from a couple thousand dollars in kindergarten to an estimated half a million dollars by retirement age," he said.



President Donald Trump speaks at Wheeler High School in Cobb County on Wednesday, July 22, 2026.

Whether that will help the GOP in November, amid widespread frustration with the high costs for gasoline, groceries and other daily staples, is an open question. Democrats see affordability as a clear line of attack. Liz Pancotti, a vice president of the left-leaning Groundwork Collaborative in Washington, D.C., said in an interview Tuesday that the accounts would do little to address financial pressures on households in the near term. Trump also touted the tax cuts he signed into law last year, but Pancotti said many of the president's other policies, including the war in Iran and related fuel prices, had wiped out the benefits from tax cuts and refunds for most working people. Trump's trip to Cobb was in many ways a standard pre-election campaign event, she said. "The problem, of course, is that he has mostly delivered higher prices and a lot of economic pain for American families." Even so, throngs of Trump fans, many wearing red MAGA ball caps, stood in long lines in the baking sun to watch Trump speak. As they waited, the Wheeler Wildcats rifle team was hawking bottles of water for a dollar. Across the street, an anti-

Trump protest had assembled behind metal barricades. One of the protesters yelled that water was free on their side. During his time on the stage, Strickland, the candidate for attorney general, said that despite "all the noise" from those protesters, the Trump accounts were a "real investment" in American families. "And I'm proud to put my name behind this kind of work," he said. After Strickland spoke, U.S. Treasurer Brandon Beach, a former Georgia state senator, noted the significance of Trump for GOP candidates. "President Trump may not be on the ballot," Beach said, "but his policies are."

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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Carrying small batch products locally grown / produced in Georgia!

BILL'S PRODUCE

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CREPE MYRTLES

New shipment of Summer Flowers

401 S. Houston Lake Rd.-Next to Lowe Toyota

CALENDAR

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Calendar

Email your
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brianna@hhjonline.com

Houston Home Journal

478-987-1823

1210 Washington St.
Perry, GA 31069

OUTBREAK

From page 1A

Groups more at risk are young children, older adults, pregnant women and those with pre-existing conditions that suppress their immune system.

O'Neil said the CDC looks for domestically acquired cases.

“For the most part, the water in the United States filters it out in the treatment process, so a lot of the cases that we normally get are internationally travel associated,” he said.

When distinguishing between isolated cases versus larger outbreaks, the health district interviews each individual case and finds out what they’ve eaten or come in contact with in the last two weeks.

Cases involving Cyclospora can be difficult to identify, he said

“It’s not something that spreads from human to human. It’s not something that you start experiencing symptoms immediately after the food that you eat, like other foodborne illnesses. It can be difficult,” he said.

Common symptoms include watery diarrhea, loss of appetite, weight loss, cramping, bloating, increased gas, nausea and fatigue.

When they investigate, the NCHD collaborates with state and federal partners to compare data. From there, they can identify if it is a common exposure.

He said this has not been seen in any of the cases in Georgia this year.

If they see an uptick, they notify healthcare workers to be on the lookout, but they have not seen that yet, O'Neil said.

DPH and the CDC encourage people to take proactive steps like washing their hands when handling fresh produce to reduce the risk of getting ill.

DPH encourages anyone with diarrhea to stay home. If symptoms last longer than a few days, they should contact their healthcare provider.

The outbreak was identified on July 14 after multiple agencies collected data in several states. According to the CDC, on Friday, July 17, Taylor Farms recalled all iceberg lettuce sourced from central Mexico. The notice included Marketside-brand products available at Walmart.

In the latest update on July 19, a sample of lettuce was reported positive on July 18. Laboratory experts reviewed the sample results and concluded that the finding did not confirm the presence of Cyclosporia and should be considered a false positive.

“FDA has notified Taylor Farms and continues working with the firm to ensure product implicated in this outbreak has been removed from the market. FDA and state partners continue to collect and analyze product samples. As of July 19, 2026, there are no confirmed positive sample results for prod-

DATA CENTER

From page 1A

engineers working on the same problem simultaneously. That ability is what makes artificial intelligence possible,” Davidson said.

Davidson’s concern was how AI links to systems like Flock.

Flock uses cameras to gather information about vehicles and uses AI to compile a searchable database for law enforcement, according to the company. County commissioners approved the cameras in December of 2022.

Davidson asked that the data center debate shift its focus past economic and environmental issues.

“When we discuss data centers, let’s move beyond conversations about water usage, transmission lines, tax incentives, and land clearing. Those are important discussions, but they are not the whole discussion,” Davidson said.

But that’s exactly what Roshonda Bailey, another Warner Robins resident, wanted to talk about. Her concern was about rising taxes and utility bills.

“We already pay enough in bills as far as electricity and water and gas. So, if they build it, who’s going to ultimately end up paying this price?” Bailey asked.

As an educator, Bailey is

concerned about children relying too much on AI. A recent NPR poll showed a majority of teachers worry AI makes it harder for students to think for themselves.

“Our kids are already struggling to read, and they rely on this AI versus their own brain. I don’t think we need data centers to help aid an educational crisis that we already have with our kids. We are teachers fighting just to get students to learn,” Bailey said.

In council comments, Councilman Keith Lauritsen validated Bailey’s concerns, while thanking the city for enacting the moratorium.

“I really like the point about the kids not learning how to read and write, and they’re just using AI. You’re exactly right,” Lauritsen said. “I know, in some form and fashion, that it’s an advantage to have AI in some ways, but there’s good and bad that come with it.”

Meanwhile, Councilman Charlie Bibb said he was pleased to see the motion on the agenda, and said the moratorium signifies the city looking out for citizens.

“We’re being ahead of the game for our community and we’re going to do what’s right for our community,” Bibb said.

Council documents note that the city’s zoning code does not define data centers, nor does it include regulations on location or

Back-to-School Community Event

July 25 | 9 a.m.
170 Starcadia Circle, Macon

Christ Chapel Macon invites families throughout the community to attend a free Back-to-School Community Event on Saturday, July 25, 2026, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. at Christ Chapel Macon, located at 170 Starcadia Circle, Macon, GA 31210.

The event is designed to help local families prepare for the upcoming school year while enjoying a fun and welcoming community atmosphere. Free groceries, backpacks, and school uniforms will be distributed to families in need while supplies last.

Children will also enjoy a dedicated kids’ play area featuring bouncy houses and activities. In addition, a free lunch will be served to all attendees during the event.

The event is open to the public, and all families are welcome to attend.

The Undoctinated Series

July 27 | 6:15 p.m.
1201 Washington Street, Perry

Join Tactical Civics for a little education for all with “The Undoctinated Series.”

Hosts are two from our younger generations: Garfield Green from Tennessee and Belle Reese from South Carolina. Hear the truth about private property in the US and the war you cannot see.

The meeting will take place in the Perry Public Library’s meeting room.

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 Edmonson at (478) 953-0320 or hedmonson@theassemblyga.org.

uct testing for Cyclospora,” according to their website.

On Thursday, July 16, the FDA announced an investigation into the outbreak linked to shredded iceberg lettuce from Mexico served at Taco Bell locations in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and West Virginia.

In a statement released on their website on Friday, July 17, Taco Bell said they have completely removed the affected Taylor Farms lettuce from their restaurants.

potential impacts. Mayor LaRhonda Patrick said the moratorium gives the city time to research data centers, decide whether they fit, and put regulations in place if one is eventually accepted.

“This is us doing our homework, doing our due diligence to make sure we are doing what is best for our citizens at large in the city of Warner Robins,” Patrick said. “Your concerns are heard, and we will do our part to bring forth something that hopefully you all will be proud of.”

The moratorium comes at a time when there are already 229 operational data centers in the state, according to datacenter-map.com.

In Houston County, the city of Perry introduced legislation in late 2024 that would only allow data centers by special exception. County leaders previously told the HHJ they have no active plans for a data center and are gauging the effects on surrounding communities before deciding if they are welcome in Houston County.

In the near term, no data center projects will be introduced in Warner Robins. The city is taking a policy-first approach, and public comments may help shape what comes next as officials decide how to move forward.

GriefShare Group

Aug. 6 - Nov. 12 | 6 - 8 p.m.
645 Perry Parkway, Perry

GriefShare is a non-denominational program that features Christ-centered, biblical teaching focusing on grief topics associated with the death of a loved one. You will find encouragement, comfort, and help in your grieving, whether your loss is recent or not so recent. This is an opportunity to be around people who understand what you are feeling.

GriefShare is being offered at Cross Point Perry Church on Thursday evenings, 6:00 - 8:00 pm starting August 6th and ending November 12th.

Cross Point Perry is located at 645 Perry Parkway here in Perry (across from Guardian Center). A \$20 fee covers the cost of the workbook.

You can register online at crosspointperry.com

1 - click on CONNECT

2 - click on EVENTS

3 - scroll down to GriefShare

4 - click on ILEARN MORE

5 - click on REGISTER

Or call Cross Point at 478-987-1116 and register with Victoria.

Community Connect Nonprofit Showcase

August 15 | 11 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
1011 Corder Road, Warner Robins

Join us for Community Connect: A Nonprofit Showcase — a free, family-friendly event designed to bring together local nonprofits, businesses, and the Middle Georgia community.

This event is all about connection—giving families the opportunity to discover local resources, and helping nonprofits and businesses build meaningful, long-term partnerships.

- Meet and connect with local nonprofits
- Learn about services, volunteer opportunities, and ways to give back
- Build relationships that continue beyond the event

Event Schedule:

11:00 AM – 12:30 PM | Business Networking + Nonprofit Setup

12:30 PM – 2:30 PM | Open to the Public

The event is proudly presented by Goosehead Insurance — Erwin Agency, in partnership with New Seasons Retirement Solutions and the VFW Post 6605.

If you’re a nonprofit or business interested in participating, please use the link below to sign up: <https://forms.gle/Awn1WsSq2hpnxLeNm8>



MACON REGIONAL
CRIMESTOPPERS



 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.
 BOX, KELLIE WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR STALKING.	 DICKERSON, DANIEL WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR A SUPERIOR CT. BENCH WARRANT STEMMING FROM CHARGES OF THEFT BY RECEIVING, OF A FIREARM BY A CONVICTED FELON.	 GRAY, JAKARIO WANTED BY THE HOUSTON COUNTY SHERIFF'S FOR SUP. CT. BW. FOR TWO COUNTS OF AGGRAVATED ASSAULT.	 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.	 PARIS, LEE WANTED BY HOUSTON CO. S.O. FOR SUP. CT. BW. FOR VGCSA, POSS. OF METHAMPHETAMINE W/INT. TO DISTB., AND POSS. F/A DURING COMM. OF FELONY.	 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.	 WILLIAMS, TAMORIAN WANTED BY THE PEACH COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE FOR SUP. CT. VOP. O/C BEING 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

54803 2/9

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 though 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.

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Share Your Viewpoint

There are three ways to submit a Letter to the Editor: Email it to brieanna@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

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All columns, editorials, viewpoints, letters to the editor, cartoons, and the like are of the express opinion of the author and NOT the Houston Home Journal, its sister newspapers, or the Georgia Trust for Local News unless otherwise expressly stated. We welcome all letters to the editor, and authors may write about any subject. However, we reserve the right to refuse to publish letters that may be offensive or break our editorial guidelines. We also reserve the right to edit letters for grammar, spelling, or style, but we will not purposely change the author's intended meaning. Letters should be no more than 500 words and should include the author's name, address, and phone number. (Only the author's name and city of address will be published.) Unsigned letters and pen names will be rejected. Authors must be the original creator of the letter; no one may submit a letter on behalf of another person. Writers may only submit one letter every month. If a writer is critical of a subject that you, a reader, take issue with, please write a responding letter to the editor. You may mention the other letter, but letters should focus on issues rather than writers. To submit a letter to the editor, email brieanna@hhjonline.com or send it to Houston Home Journal, 1210 Washington St., Perry, GA 31069.

Read
YOUR VIEW
in the
Houston
Home
Journal

Guns in America

COLUMNIST

KELLY BURKE



Amendment exists because the Founders believed government should never have a monopoly on force. One of my favorite observations is when a newscaster says, "John Smith had an arsenal of firearms," and then describes a couple of handguns, a rifle, and a thousand rounds of ammunition. For many people, that's just getting warmed up. An arsenal? Not exactly. I've got friends who own more ammo than the local National

Guard armory. So back to "Dirty Harry." That movie series really personified the divide in America. We are not the Queen's subjects. Most of us believe in taking care of ourselves. And I can't help but recall another Clint Eastwood character, Bill Munny, in "Unforgiven." After Munny shoots saloon owner Skinny Dubois, Sheriff Little Bill Daggett (played by Gene Hackman) yells, "You just

shot an unarmed man!" Munny coldly replies, "Well, he should have armed himself if he's gonna decorate his saloon with my friend." We also watch out for our friends. 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 dakellyburke@gmail.com.



Even in our big cities, much of the populace eschews gun ownership. Can you live your entire life and never need a gun? Sure. In metropolitan America, gun ownership is about 19%. In rural and suburban America, it's over 50%. Big cities tend to make gun ownership more difficult with draconian permitting laws, so that's part of it. But many also take comfort in the belief that living among the masses somehow keeps them safe. In suburban or rural America, if someone told you that you had to get government permission to own a gun, you'd probably say, "Yeah? I'll get right on that." The Second Amendment is pretty important. It's second, after all. But it only applies to hunting, right? Or being in a militia? Nope. An occupying force would likely get more resistance in Houston County than in Fulton County. I could be wrong, but it'd be tough taking Kathleen. The Second

Thoughts on schoolwork and hoarding

NEW
SOUTHERN DAD

KYLE DOMINY



with one. To think of all the moments of my youth squandered, paper and pencil wasted trying to figure out math problems. But then again, how would my life have turned out if I was good with figures? I could be living the face-paced, sexy life of a corporate accountant. My son has a good head for numbers, so much so that, to his teachers' disdain, he can do a lot of math in his head. He's like some kind of savant. I tried getting him into a casino one time with the ol' two kids in a trench coat trick, but apparently the security guard watched a lot of cartoons. But back to the accumu-

lation of things... I do keep a scrapbook of cherished drawings or written things for sentimental purposes, but the rest goes right into the trash. I don't want to end up on that TV show where psychiatrists and cleaning specialists mock help someone so the people at home can feel better about their cluttered homes. Not too long ago, while helping my parents clean out their attic I came upon a hoard of schoolwork from my childhood. My mother seemingly was incapable of throwing out the things I now so easily toss into the wastebasket. She asked if I wanted to save any of it. You can

guess the answer. In the end we did what should have been done decades before - got rid of a ton of paper. My knees hurt for weeks after multiple trips up and down the stairs laden with boxes. Similarly, my wife's parents saved a lot of her things in large containers that eventually made their way to my garage where they have sat undisturbed for years. I'm dying to haul these bulky, heavy boxes away, but I'm patiently waiting for permission. OK, maybe impatiently. I could just do it and hope it goes unnoticed. It's a victimless crime, and I'd have a corner of my garage back. That's the problem with saving things. Precious memories from one moment become a chore down the road, or for someone else all together. So this school year I'm going to do my kids, and future self a favor. I'm going to keep throwing things away.

LIFESTYLE & FAITH

To be an Atheist: What one must believe

During the mid-1800s, Robert Ingersoll, a renowned atheist, visited Henry Ward Beecher, a prominent minister. Ingersoll told Beecher about a wonderful new book by Charles Darwin which explained that everything came into being without God.

“Where did human beings come from?” asked Beecher.

“From apes,” replied, Ingersoll.

“Ah,” said Beecher, “and the apes came from?”

“Lower animals” responded Ingersoll, who continued his explanation: “And the lower animals arose from still lower forms, and on and on down through the lowest chain of life to the one-celled creatures that first formed in the sea.”

“And where did the seas come from,” inquired Beecher...and the world itself, the sun, the moon, and the stars?”

Ingersoll just spread his hands. “They just happened. We don’t need some mythical deity to explain such things.”

Later that evening, Beecher took Ingersoll into his library to show him some new books. Ingersoll’s attention was immediately captured by a globe on Beecher’s desk that depicted the stars and the constellations of the night sky. Ingersoll examined the globe closely to find the manufacturer’s name so he could order one.

“This is such a marvelous globe,” Ingersoll observed. “Who made it?”

“Why, nobody made it,”

PARABLES TO PONDER

BILLY POWELL



said Beecher, with a wry grin. “It just happened.”

The world around us and the cosmos beyond us cry out in mute testimony that there is a God, yet the atheist thinks, as Robert Ingersoll, that it all just happened. The Universe is made of matter comprising planets, solar systems, stars, and galaxies. To be an atheist, an individual must believe that all matter in the universe just popped up ex-nihilo. Further, the atheist must believe that the space medium which envelopes all heavenly bodies was not created, but just happened.

Atheists must believe that human life was spawned from chemicals floating in a primordial soup that spontaneously received the spark of life. These chemicals formed one-celled sea creatures that over eons became fish that later crawled up on the shore, evolved into a monkeys, and after eons became erect-standing Homosapiens.

Atheists discredit the biblical account that God created Adam from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of life, and formed Eve from Adam’s rib. Since these first progenitors produced children, who instructed the male spermato-

zoon how to fertilize the female ovum to produce a human embryo?

What power maintains the orbital precision of the heavenly bodies that move predictably through outer space?

Who manages the thermodynamics and nuclear forces that keep the unseen world of the atom intact?

Who makes the physical laws governing planets and stars predictable but renders unpredictable the laws of quantum physics governing subatomic particles?

Einstein went to his grave still puzzled over this phenomenon.

In speaking to Job, God said, “Who holds up the pillars that support the earth? Who closed the gates to hold back the sea? Have you ever ordered the dawn to seize the earth? Have you visited the store-rooms where I keep the snow and hail? Who dug a channel for the pouring rain? Have you ever been to the place where the sun comes up and the east wind blows? Can you tie together the Pleiades (star cluster in constellation Taurus)? Who directs the Big and Little Dippers?”

Psalm 19:1 sums it up: “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows his handiwork.”

Golden relics of the American kitchen: The enduring charm of yellow ware

In an era before mass-produced glass Pyrex or lightweight stainless steel dominated modern countertops, the heart of the home beat to the steady, heavy rhythm of yellow ware. If you have ever wandered through a dusty antique shop or sorted through an heirloom-filled pantry, you have likely laid eyes on these warm, golden-toned pottery pieces. Once the humble workhorses of 19th-century kitchens, yellow ware bowls have quietly transformed from everyday utilitarian tools into some of the most sought-after treasures in the world of antique collecting.

Originating in England during the late 1700s, yellow ware truly found its footing when production crossed the Atlantic in the early 1800s. American potteries flourished between the 1820s and 1940s, particularly in regions like New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Ohio, where rich deposits of natural yellow clay were plentiful. When fired and glazed, this clay produced a distinct spectrum of color ranging from pale, buttery yellows to deep, rich mustard tones.

While mixing bowls were by far the most ubiquitous item produced, potteries also churned out kitchen crocks, pitchers, pie plates, and intricate molds. Early iterations were strictly plain and functional, built to withstand the rigorous daily demands of kneading

ALL ABOUT ANTIQUES

JILLINDA FALEN



bread, whisking eggs, and stirring heavy stews. As the decades progressed, manufacturers began introducing subtle decorative elements. Simple bands of brown, blue, or white slip glaze were applied around the rims, and molded geometric patterns began to appear, elevating these practical vessels into decorative kitchen accents.

For modern enthusiasts, determining the value of yellow ware is part science and part storytelling. While a small, undecorated bowl might fetch anywhere from \$25 to \$50 at a local estate sale, rare, large nesting bowls measuring over twelve inches across can easily command several hundred dollars.

several key factors dictate what a piece is worth on today’s market:

•**Decoration and Rarity:** Bowls featuring colorful striped bands or crisp, unusual molded patterns are significantly more prized by collectors than plain versions.

•**Size:** Because larger bowls were more prone to breaking over decades of heavy use, surviving large-scale pieces are far

rarer.

•**Age and Provenance:** Early 19th-century examples, especially those bearing identifiable maker’s marks, hold premium value.

•**Condition:** While minor knife marks and subtle staining are accepted as signs of honest age, major cracks and heavy chips will naturally reduce a piece’s financial value.

Ultimately, the irresistible appeal of yellow ware lies in its seamless blend of durability, historical weight, and rustic beauty. Unlike pristine fine porcelain meant only for formal display, yellow ware carries the soft patina of human history. Each worn rim and faint glaze craze offers a tactile link to the generations of home cooks who relied on them day in and day out.

Whether carefully stacked on open kitchen shelving, showcased in a rustic country cupboard, or put back to work mixing a weekend batch of biscuits, these golden vessels bring an undeniable warmth to the modern home—proving that true craftsmanship never goes out of style.

Pastor's wife: Forgetting the buttermilk

When the alarm went off on Sunday morning at 4 a.m., there was a lot to do. Coffee day for our jail Bible study meant brewing started early.

It was going to be a busy day. There was jail study at 6:45, Sunday School breakfast, then Sunday School, the 11 o’clock service, followed by a deacons and wives dinner. The evening would end with Bible study at a local rehab.

I had promised to take banana bread to the employees at the rehab. A note in my phone and on a kitchen cabinet were reminders.

At 5 am, I realized there was one small window to bake the promised bread: it was before jail. If I mixed it up quickly, there would be just enough time for it to bake.

I hurried around the kitchen as the coffee brewed, adding ingredients to a bowl. Filling the loaf pans, the batter didn’t seem exactly right. It felt thicker than usual. When I put the banana bread in the oven, it looked...off. Hadn’t I mixed everything as I always did? Hmmm.

I turned from the oven and saw the buttermilk on the counter. That was it. In my haste, I had forgotten to add the buttermilk. Buttermilk makes a big difference in banana bread.

GUEST COLUMNIST

DAWN REED



Quickly donning oven mitts, I yanked the pans out of the oven, poured the batter in a bowl, then whisked in the forgotten white liquid. What a mess! New pans were filled and rushed back to the oven.

I always pray for my food to be a blessing to the receiver. This was gonna be a stretch. The odds were slim that it would turn out. Hoping for the best, I carried on with the prep for the morning.

Martha is a famous Bible example of having a lot to do. Told in Luke 10, her story is one we can sink our teeth into. Jesus was right there in her house, but she was too focused on other things to spend time with Him. As we read, we might be tempted to think, “Silly, Martha,” but when we compare our routine to hers, it’s easy to see how it could happen.

These days, we can be super busy. Busy doing good things. As followers of Christ, that’s our goal: to do good works

(Ephesians 2:10). But, in our busyness, it’s crucial to not leave Him out of the mix.

Just like buttermilk is vital to banana bread, Bible reading, prayer, and being a part of a church are vital to our wellbeing, our spiritual being. If we leave one of them out, our mix will be off. Without a big daily serving of Jesus, I’m undone.

The acid in buttermilk reacts with the baking soda to make the banana bread rise. It brings the change.

As summer brings opportunities for other things, let’s remember to keep Jesus the main, delicious thing. He brings the change in us!

The banana bread turned out fine after all. I’ll make sure not to leave it out again.

Dawn Reed is a pastor’s wife, newspaper columnist, and the author of Weiner Stew: Inspiring Stories from Appalachia. Reach her at preacher-swife7@yahoo.com.

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STATEWIDE CLASSIFIEDS FOR THE WEEK 7/26/26

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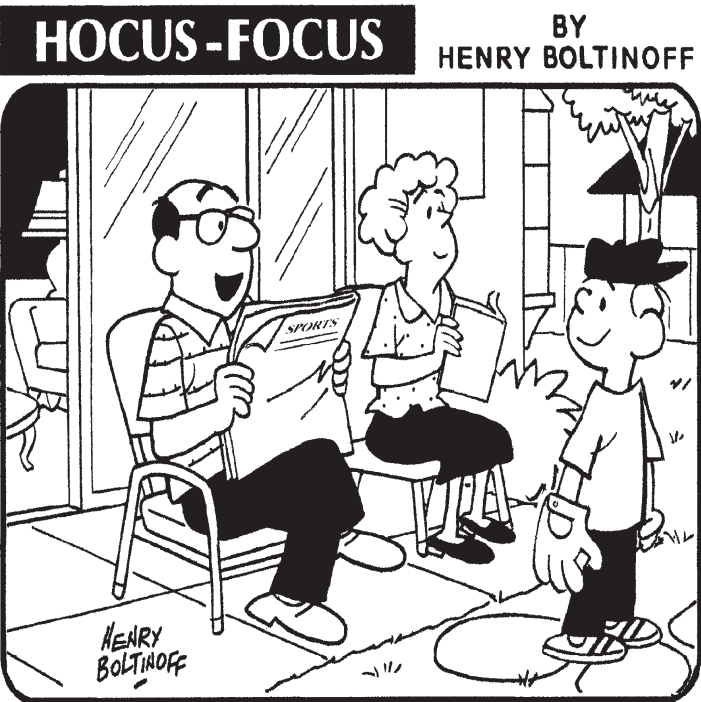
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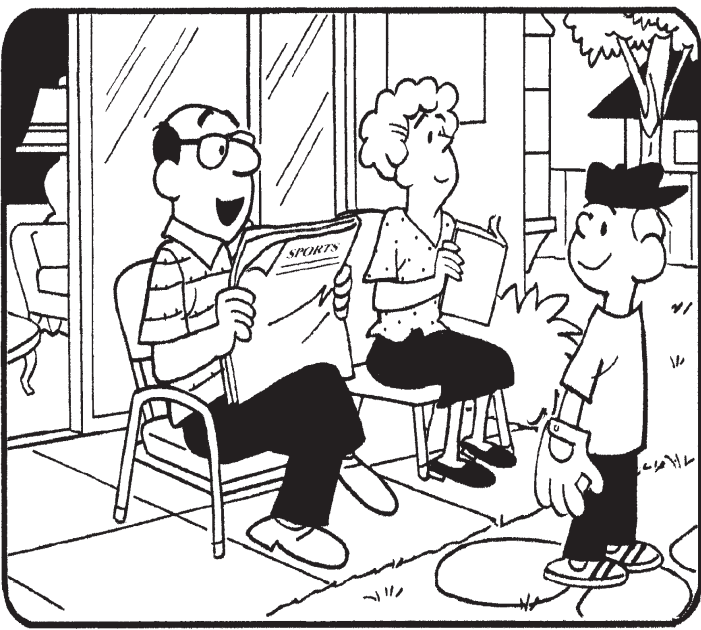
ENTERTAINMENT



Out on a Limb

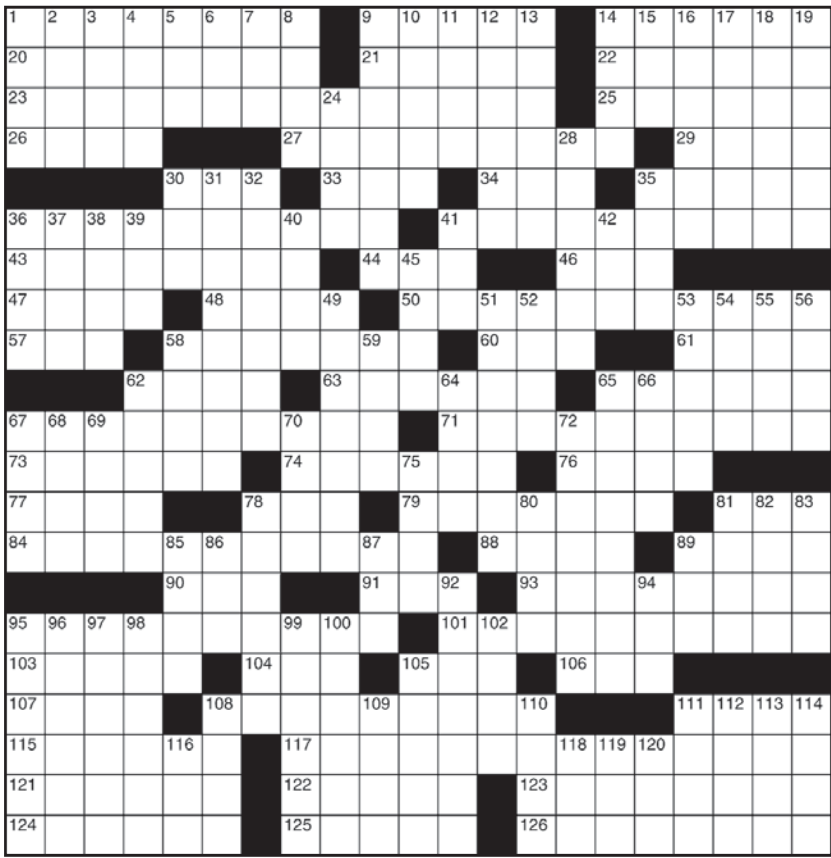


Find at least six differences in details between panels.



Differences: 1. Foot is smaller. 2. Window is added to house. 3. Arm is not showing. 4. Lamp is larger. 5. Window is added to house. 6. Back of chair is smaller.

CROSSWORD 7-25-26



CLUES ACROSS

- 1 Off-guard way to be caught
- 9 Bread has a lot of them
- 14 Anchorage locale
- 20 Aspire to something specific
- 21 Love, in Lido
- 22 Hoped for
- 23 Founder of the Miracles
- 25 Lodged
- 26 Pulley part
- 27 With long suffering
- 29 Rajah's wife
- 30 Alternatives to Cokes or Pepsis
- 33 -- -mo
- 34 Twice LI
- 35 Raptor's claw
- 36 Record player
- 41 Ape in an arcade game
- 43 1307-27 king of England
- 44 Prefix with natal or con
- 46 Comic book shriek
- 47 Thick deli cut
- 48 This, in Baja
- 50 Olduvai Gorge paleontologist
- 57 Beer cask
- 58 Removes (oneself)

- 60 Veteran
- 61 Europe's "Eternal City"
- 62 French battle site of '44
- 63 Doesn't skip, as an event
- 65 Reagan appointee Antonin
- 67 Speak frankly
- 71 Jungle gym
- 73 Film director May
- 74 1954-76 Dodgers manager Walter
- 76 T-man Eliot
- 77 Outing ruiner
- 78 "How was -- know?"
- 79 Self-server
- 81 Some IRA contents
- 84 Master of the dog Pluto
- 88 Sundown's direction
- 89 Accepted
- 90 China's Long March leader
- 91 2012 Best Director Lee
- 93 Alternative to Match or OkCupid
- 95 It's pushed in an ice rink
- 101 Tart gin cocktail
- 103 Once-popular anesthetic
- 104 Certain pipe shape
- 105 Maple fluid

- 106 Tax return ID
- 107 Tiger's sound
- 108 Restricting freedom of thought
- 111 Work site welfare org.
- 115 Poppas' partners
- 117 "Arrow's Fall" novelist
- 121 Of high peaks
- 122 "Rapture" singer Baker
- 123 All aspects considered
- 124 Fitting one inside another
- 125 A-bomb trial
- 126 Index entries ... or what 10 answers in this puzzle have?

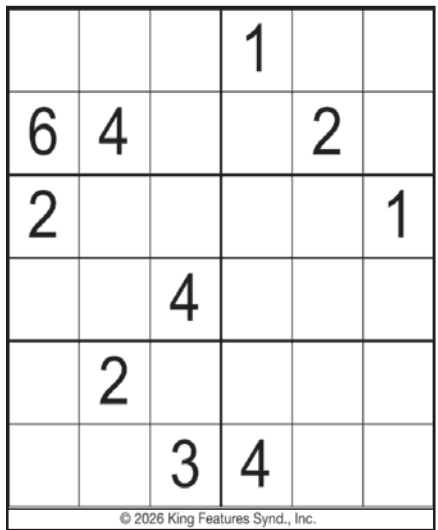
CLUES DOWN

- 1 KGB's land
- 2 Lost clown fish of film
- 3 Sitting on
- 4 Stir to life
- 5 Go gray, say
- 6 Singer Acuff
- 7 It may get plugged up
- 8 Pig food
- 9 Jenner of reality TV
- 10 Prenatal exam
- 11 Suitor's flower
- 12 Rodeo horse
- 13 Submitted, as an entry
- 14 Out of whack
- 15 Taoism's -- -tzu
- 16 Inuit parka
- 17 Fr. resort port
- 18 Really into
- 19 Appending
- 24 Bottom
- 28 In this way
- 30 -- Nabisco (old corp.)
- 31 World Champion Bull of 2009
- 32 Clip, as a coupon
- 35 Young kid36 Study fixture
- 37 Not in use
- 38 Gala bagful
- 39 Hailed car
- 40 Thing flown in the wind
- 41 Scooby- --
- 42 Wiggling fish
- 45 Otherwise
- 49 "Still I Rise" poet Maya
- 51 Until this time
- 52 Element #26
- 53 Saudis, say

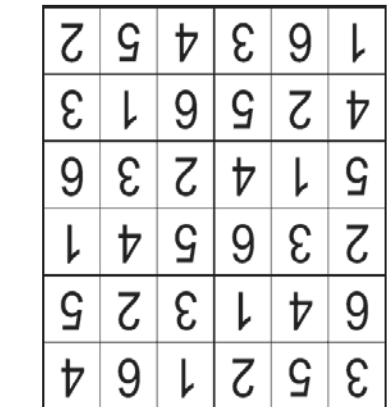
- 54 Nut with caffeine
- 55 Kuwaiti royal
- 56 Positive votes
- 58 Env. alert
- 59 Santa's bagful
- 62 Short-limbed lizard
- 64Urban haze
- 65 Reel from a wallop
- 66 Certain skin bulge
- 67 Time in office
- 68 Jai --
- 69 Secular
- 70 Green Hornet's valet
- 72 Fried stuffed dumplings
- 75 Many a new driver
- 78 "Pass the ball to me!"
- 80 Crawl (with)
- 81 Diner worker
- 82 Concluded
- 83 Vodka brand
- 85 Part of ER: Abbr.
- 86 "Huzzah!"
- 87 Cinch -- (trash bag brand)
- 89 Sister station of Flix, in brief
- 92 Give the evil eye to
- 94 -- Tin Tin
- 95 Politico Cain
- 96 "Troy" actor Peter
- 97 Bites, as a horse at the bit
- 98 Muppet frog
- 99 Tracey of "Mrs. America"
- 100 Patron
- 102 Apple debut of 2010
- 105 Splinter groups
- 108 Opposite of new
- 109 Spreadable cheese
- 110 It may get plugged up

- 111 Eight, in Baja
- 112 Alternative to Heath, candy-wise
- 113 Clutched
- 114 Positive votes
- 116 Netflix's "Anne With --"
- 118 Opposite of NNW
- 119 Install, as tile
- 120 "How cute!"

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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EVEN WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING.

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BUSINESS & FINANCE

Bankrupt genetic company to make payment to Georgia

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

ATLANTA — The genetic testing company 23andMe gave tens of thousands of Georgians insights into their ancestry and health predispositions.

A massive data breach also subjected those Georgians to an invasion of privacy, allowing others an opportunity to see their genetic information after their data was published for sale on the dark web, according to Georgia Attorney General Chris Carr.

Carr announced that 171,125 Georgians were affected by the 2023 breach that compromised the genetic data of 6.9 million customers worldwide.

The unraveling of the company has led to a settlement between state attorneys general and the bankruptcy trustee for 23andMe that will result in a \$452,232 payment to the state treasury, Carr's office said last week.

The money comes from an \$18 million settlement fund for participating

states. It is separate from a \$47 million class-action settlement with customers, a spokesman for Carr's office said Tuesday.

The claim period for the class-action lawsuit ended in February.

The company initially denied the breach had occurred, then blamed consumers for exposing themselves with their account setup or password choices, according to Carr's office, which said 23andMe initially accepted no responsibility for a "credential stuffing" breach.

Carr joined 41 other attorneys general to hold the company to account. Their investigation found "unreasonable" data security practices, Carr's office said, including failure to remediate known vulnerabilities.

The company filed for bankruptcy in March 2025, and its consumer data and other assets were sold to TTAM Research Institute, a nonprofit that was formed by 23andMe founder and former CEO Anne Wojcicki and subsequently reregistered as 23andMe Research Institute.

Customers can delete their genetic data by signing into their 23andMe account: Start with the user profile in the upper right-hand corner, click "settings," scroll to "23andMe Data" at the bottom and click the "view" button, then scroll down to the red "Permanently Delete Data" button at the bottom and click it.

Customers can download their data first by clicking the "Request Download" button after clicking the "view" button and before clicking the delete button.

For more information about account closure, visit the company's website: customer.care.23andme.com/hc/en-us/articles/212170688-Requesting-23andMe-Account-Closure.

For more information about the class-action settlement, visit 23andmedatasettlement.com.

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.

BBB Alert: Don't be fooled by ‘free’ gas and grocery card postcards

With the cost of groceries and fuel continuing to strain many household budgets, it's no surprise that consumers are eager to take advantage of legitimate savings opportunities. Unfortunately, scammers know this too, and they're increasingly using the U.S. mail to lure people with promises of free gas and grocery gift cards.

Better Business Bureau (BBB) has recently received multiple reports through our BBB Scam Tracker page from individuals who received postcards claiming they qualified for valuable gas and grocery cards and vouchers.

One resident recently reported their experience with this type of mailing from "AAPP." The resident reported that he received a postcard claiming that \$309.64 of gas and grocery vouchers were being held in his name.

He noted that he did some research and was taken to BBB's Scam Tracker page to learn more. However, others who didn't do their homework weren't as fortunate. Instead, they found that when attempting to claim what sounded like valuable vouchers, they got tricked into spending money.

Here's what one woman shared: "Sister received a postcard from AAPP, Presorted 1st class mail from Tampa phone #. Postcard stated she was eligible for gas & grocery cards. She agreed to the \$5 processing fee, then immediately after, they took another \$46. Total dollars lost: \$51."

The use of a costly postcard can make the offer appear authentic, but also shows just how much money can be earned by taking advantage of unsuspecting individuals. These scams often target thousands of consumers, and even modest unauthorized charges can quickly add up for criminals.

The postcards may include official-looking barcodes, tracking num-

BBB TIPS

KELVIN COLLINS



bers, expiration dates, and customer service phone numbers to create a false sense of credibility. Some even use urgent language to pressure consumers into responding quickly before they have time to research the offer. These can include: "Limited time offer," or "Final notice."

In addition to groceries or gas, these types of mailings may claim to offer rebates or shopping rewards. Recipients are usually instructed to call a phone number or visit a website to claim their reward, and as noted in the example above, callers are usually asked to pay a fee, which may be referenced as a small processing, activation, shipping, or handling fee—often around \$5—to receive hundreds of dollars in gift cards or vouchers.

Once payment information is provided, one of several things may happen:

- Additional unauthorized charges appear on the consumer's account.
- The consumer is unknowingly enrolled in a monthly subscription program.
- The promised gift cards never arrive, or low-value coupons or promotional materials are received instead.
- The company becomes difficult—or impossible—to contact for refunds.

Your BBB recommends taking these precautions:

- Remember that legitimate prizes don't require you to pay first. If someone asks for a processing fee, activation fee, shipping charge, or any other upfront payment before you receive your reward, consider it a major warning sign.
- Research the company

independently. Don't rely solely on the information printed on a postcard. Research the company's name along with words like "BBB," "reviews," or "scam." Visit BBB.org to check the company's Business Profile, customer reviews, and complaint history.

Never provide payment information under pressure. If you're told you must act immediately, slow down. Legitimate companies won't pressure you into making an immediate payment.

Watch your bank and credit card statements carefully. If you've already provided payment information, review your accounts for unauthorized charges and report suspicious transactions to your financial institution immediately.

Be cautious with personal information. Even if the fee is small, scammers may also be trying to collect your address, date of birth, banking information, or other personal details that could be used for future fraud.

If you receive a questionable postcard or believe you've been targeted by this type of scam, we hope you'll report it to BBB Scam Tracker at BBB.org/ScamTracker. Your report can help warn others in your community and provide valuable information about emerging scam trends.

If you've already lost money, contact your bank or credit card company as soon as possible to dispute unauthorized charges. You should also report the incident to your state's consumer protection office and the Federal Trade Commission at ReportFraud.ftc.gov.

PERRY

From page 1A

on April 30, city staff was made aware that two TSW principals involved with the project were no longer with the firm. The agenda document says city staff had lost confidence in TSW completing the project to the city's satisfaction.

Concerns raised by the city included infrequent and incomplete communication with staff and inability to handle requests in a timely manner. This started after the two principals left the firm.

The city also felt there were unproductive meetings like the first steering committee and public information session on July 9.

In the document, Smith said he has had two discussions with TSW about their concerns and dissatisfaction.

In a statement to the Houston Home Journal, TSW said, "TSW values

the opportunity to partner with communities across Georgia and appreciates the opportunity to have contributed to the city of Perry's Comprehensive Plan. We respect the city's decision and wish the community well as the planning process moves forward."

The city paid a total of \$78,378.30 to TSW for their work through June 30. Since the city didn't cancel the contract until mid-July, they could receive an additional invoice.

During the city council meeting, Laura Mathis, MGRC's Executive Director, said there will be no additional charge to the city. This is because the city is a member of MGRC. It is funded by federal, state and local governments.

The Middle Georgia Regional Commission develops, promotes and assists in establishing coordinated and comprehensive planning in the

state. They are also working with Houston County and the City of Warner Robins on their comprehensive plans.

The city said the commission is familiar with the city and its plan.

Mathis provided a timeline to Mayor Randall Walker and the council, saying they will use the survey and engagement activities already completed. They plan to have a draft plan available by October 29. They will then send that draft to the Department of Community Affairs by December 18.

There will be two public hearings, and dates will be announced at a later time.

Mayor and council will hold their next pre-council meeting at 5 p.m. and the regular council meeting at 6 p.m. on Aug. 4. Everyone is invited to attend, and the agenda is available on the city's website before meetings. Both meetings are also livestreamed on YouTube.

CHECK

From page 1A

Center is taking a proactive approach with a welfare check system available for all county residents.

Their system contacts individuals signed up for the program at a scheduled time. If there is no response, law enforcement checks on them. Anyone can sign up at no cost for the newly integrated system.

In June, the 911 Center averaged 11 welfare checks per day.

Not every 911 center has this system in place. Houston County 911 Center Director Captain Veronica Edens said in an interview that it is an additional service the 911 Center has chosen to provide.

"We knew we wanted to find another option so we could continue providing this service," Edens said. "We wanted something that would allow us to continue what we were already doing but with updated technology that can be maintained and

supported going forward."

Edens believes that Houston County 911 offers more than just answering calls in times of crisis.

A person falling and not able to reach a phone could lead to law enforcement providing the help they need. Edens said that is the sole purpose of the program.

"911 is traditionally reactive. Most of the time, someone calls us because something has already happened," she said. "A program like [this] gives us an opportunity to be proactive and check on some of our more vulnerable citizens when something just doesn't seem right."

At the July 7, 2026, Houston County Commissioners meeting, the board approved a one-year service agreement with ConfirmOK as the 911 center's new system, replacing the old software.

Edens said the old system was great but becoming outdated. She said it would freeze, forcing 911 center staff to call for wellness checks manually.

The new system,

ConfirmOK, is based out of Carlsbad, California, and is more modern and cloud-based.

"ConfirmOK gives us a more reliable system with better tools for managing the program," she said. "[The software] can make multiple attempts to reach a participant before an alert is generated. It provides better notification, documentation, and reporting capabilities."

Other programs such as Snug Safety have a payment element. According to their website, individuals can either sign up for the yearly package at \$16.67 a month for up to three daily check-ins. People can also pay for ConfirmOK directly on the software's website, but residents should not worry about paying at all due to their partnership with Houston County's 911 Center.

Families of Houston County residents who can benefit from a daily wellness check-in should call the Houston County 911 Center at 478-542-9911 and ask for Sheena Cannon.



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By CLAY BROWN
HHJ Sports Editor
clay@hhjonline.com

"I didn't realize [the band] did eight hour days. They're here before us some days and they leave at like, six to seven," said



"I find myself really grateful that I picked an indoor sport," Darnell said with a laugh. "I know they practice for like five hours

The event starts with football players running band students and cheerleaders through various drills. For the band, spe-

"Band kids, we don't really get as much physical activity as football or cheerleaders do," Polisero said. "So when you put them in there, they know what it's like to be as if they were on the field..."

Maxwell and other football players learned the precision required to march in step and hold instruments and their

"[The] football program works so hard, and all the other programs, they're out here for like eight hour days. They put in so much work for Friday nights," Maxwell said. "It's just great to bond with them and to get and see what they have to do to get prepared for Friday nights just like us."

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1 Section, 8 Pages

Financing the Fight:

How Robins AFB's Comptroller Squadron turns resources into readiness



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — Lt. Col. Thomas Donigan, 78th Comptroller Squadron commander, and Senior Master Sgt. Traci Coston, 78th Comptroller Squadron Senior Enlisted Leader, speak with staff members at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, July 13, 2026. CPTS manages military pay, oversees budgets, and provides financial support that keeps the Robins AFB missionready.



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — Airman 1st Class Roger Stubbs, 78th Comptroller Squadron financial operations technician, speaks to Airmen who are preparing to separate from the United States Air Force at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, July 13, 2026. Stubbs and other FO technicians play a direct, hands-on role ensuring Airmen receive their pay and entitlements accurately and timely.



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. — Senior Airman Chloe Ellis, 78th Comptroller Squadron military pay technician, left, provides assistance to an Airman preparing for a permanent change of station at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, July 13, 2026. A military pay technician audits travel vouchers, updates location-based allowances like Basic Allowance for Housing, and process relocation reimbursements.

By BRIEANNA SMITH
HHJ Managing Editor
brieanna@hhjonline.com

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE — On most days at Robins Air Force Base, the work of the comptroller squadron is nearly invisible. There are no roaring engines or aircraft taking off from their offices.

Yet, as Lt. Col. Thomas Donigan likes to put it, nothing at Robins happens without their work.

“Our motto is ‘Financing

the fight,” he said. “Nothing happens without resources and money, and all those dollars come through our squadron.”

Behind that motto is a team of military and civilian professionals who quietly keep the installation running: paying people, funding operations, and making sure every taxpayer dollar is spent legally and effectively.

If you ask around the base what finance does, you’ll

probably hear about travel vouchers. That’s exactly the misconception the comptroller squadron wants to change.

“The biggest misconception is that we just pay travel vouchers,” said Senior Master Sgt. Traci Coston, senior enlisted leader for the squadron. “Our job is multifaceted, and each and every one of our Airmen can serve in every role within our unit.”

At Robins, the comptrol-

ler squadron services 54 mission partners across the installation. Their responsibilities include:

- Military pay for approximately 7,000 military members
- Civilian pay for about 14,000 civilian employees
- Accounting and budgeting for the 78th Air Base Wing and its mission partners
- Audit support to ensure the base can account

for how funds are used

The squadron’s reach touches almost everyone on the installation.

When the leadership at Robins talks about “readiness,” they’re usually referring to the ability to deploy Airmen, launch aircraft, sustain operations, and respond to crises. For the comptroller squadron, readiness is measured in another currency: dollars and decisions.

“We turn resources into

readiness,” Coston said.

In practical terms, that means carefully aligning money with mission. On any given day, comptroller Airmen and civilians are deciphering commanders’ priorities and translating them into funded actions that are legal, timely, and properly documented.

“Day to day, it’s understanding commander’s priorities and taking those dollars and resources and actualizing those priorities,” Donigan said. “Behind the scenes, there’s dozens of different financial systems and laws and regulations that the members need to know and work through, and they do that with expertise.”

That expertise is what allows commanders to execute their mission sets with confidence that the financial foundation is solid.

The squadron’s impact becomes especially clear during emergencies and large-scale operations.

When Hurricane Helene hit Moody Air Force Base, Robins’ comptroller squadron formed a team and went down to support the response.

“All family members got evacuated and they were taken care of financially while they were away at their safe havens,” Coston said. “Making sure that the emergency responders had the finances to take care of themselves while they were needed on site.”

Beyond natural disasters, their work directly supports deployments and operations downrange. Donigan pointed to recent efforts resourcing security forces members supporting Operation Southern Spear and members deploying for Operation Enduring Freedom.

Keeping the warfighter connected: 52nd CBCS leads Air Force in modern tactical communications

By Lauren Boggs
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- The 461st Air Control Wing's 52nd Combat Communications Squadron put its capabilities to the test during Exercise Gator Qual at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, July 7-24, 2026.

During the exercise, Airmen familiarized themselves with and qualified on two next-generation tactical communication systems: the Agile Communications Package and Fly-Away Communications Terminal. They also learned how to rapidly deploy these systems using the Joint

Communication Support Element's Global Enterprise Network.

These compact, highly deployable tactical communications packages offer vital phone, data and internet services downrange. They are designed specifically to support Agile Combat Employment, the Air Force's strategy of operating quickly and unpredictably from remote or austere locations.

Rather than requiring Airmen to haul heavy, delicate physical hardware, the ACP/FACT kits rely heavily on virtualization, or software that can digitally mimic hardware processes. It's similar to replacing a large DVD collection with an online stream-

ing service. This technological leap makes the equipment significantly smaller, more agile and versatile than legacy systems.

"The kits are modernizing the way that we're providing communications to the warfighters downrange. The footprint of the kit is a lot smaller," said Senior Airman Aaron Barnes, 52nd CBCS tactical communications technician. "With virtualization, we don't have to deal with the limits of physical hardware anymore. We're able to spin up multiple virtual machines, expanding our capabilities."

Utilizing specialized GEN configurations, Airmen can instantly establish secured and unsecured connections

using whatever services are available, from commercial internet service providers to military satellite communications systems. This integration gives Airmen robust options for their primary, alternate, contingency and emergency, or PACE, plans, ensuring consistent connectivity in contested or austere environments.

"Before GEN configurations and the ACP/FACT we had to rely on a MILSATCOM connection as our primary, which can get bogged down and be a little slower," said 1st Lt. Conner Carey, 52nd CBCS Mission Support Flight commander. "Being able to use commercial internet gives us more bandwidth and speed

and bolsters our PACE plan by giving us more ways to deliver communications capabilities."

"It's honestly amazing to have the opportunity to show and bring out this new generation of communications to enable the warfighters," added Barnes.

Serving as the official pilot unit for this new technology, the 52nd CBCS is providing the blueprint for communications modernization across the Air Force. Over the past three years, the squadron has transitioned these kits from experimental beta-testing in 2023 to fully operational systems that are being used downrange today. The Air Force aims to roll out these

kits with the GEN configuration to communications units across the enterprise later this year.

"We are also working to build the Work Center Job Qualification Tasks that they have to perform," said Carey. "In order to meet our window, we had to do some forward-leaning and get these job qualification tasks done so that we can qualify these guys. Once they are good to go and they know the kit, they're going to go out and perform the job."

By setting the standard today, the 52nd CBCS ensures the Air Force is ready to deploy lighter, faster and more resilient communications.

FIGHT

From page 1B

"Whether it's overseas operations or readiness across the base, all those financial documents eventually flow through our office," he said.

The squadron's responsibilities extend beyond internal readiness. They also help ensure accountability to Congress and the American public.

Part of that work runs through the accounting office, where every funding document is checked to ensure it meets three standards: proper purpose, time, and amount.

"Part of the certification of their funds through our accounting office is to ensure that the correct purpose, time, and amount is being used," said Deputy Comptroller Annette Eustis. "The line of accounting lines up with the requirements on the

funding document."

The comptroller squadron also plays a key role in the Air Force-wide effort to achieve a "clean" financial audit.

"We are actually required by Congress to get this by the end of 2028," Eustis said, referring to the Financial Improvement and Audit Remediation (FIAR) initiative. The goal, she explained, is to be able to follow every document "from the appropriation bill all the way down to the outlays from Treasury."

That audit trail doesn't cover just financial transactions; it also includes inventory, real property, and other assets. The point, she said, is to demonstrate that the Air Force is being a good steward of public funds.

The effects of the squadron's work are also felt far beyond the gates of Robins.

Every other year, Robins publishes an economic impact analysis that high-

lights just how much money flows through the base into the local community. Donigan noted that the most recent report showed about \$13.5 billion in funding associated with the installation.

While the comptroller squadron focuses on internal financial operations, its work helps ensure that those billions of dollars are properly managed: supporting jobs, businesses, and opportunities throughout Middle Georgia.

The people who work in the comptroller squadron don't just process numbers. They develop a wide range of skills over their careers.

Customer service is foundational, Coston said, but it's only the beginning. Team members also build strong analytical, computer, and briefing skills, along with a deep understanding of how the Air Force operates and what commanders need to carry out their mis-

sions.

Professional growth is structured and deliberate. Eustis and Donigan described a variety of training and development opportunities, including:

- Formal financial management courses such as Basic, Primary, and Defense Financial Management Courses (BFMC, PFMC, DFMC)
- A joint-level Financial Management certification
- Annual Individual Development Plans (IDPs) reviewed by supervisors to align training with career goals

Robins also offers a unique environment where financial professionals can rotate through different organizations, including the Air Force Sustainment Center, Life Cycle Management Center, Reserve Command, and other partners.

If there is ever a moment when finance's impact

becomes personal, it's when paychecks are at risk.

During a recent government shutdown, members across the Air Force faced uncertainty about their pay. At Robins, comptroller Airmen worked long hours with higher headquarters and the Secretary of the Air Force's office to ensure that 77 newly accessed members, who were still being paid manually, didn't miss a paycheck.

On the civilian side, once funding resumed, the team was able to get about 97% of employees paid within three days, rather than waiting for the next scheduled pay period, even as they battled old, unreliable systems and weeks of backlogged time records.

Those efforts underscored what Coston and Eustis already knew well: behind every Airman and civilian is a family depending on that income.

Inside the military, the

work of the comptroller squadron might first be felt as something simple: pay arriving on time, travel being reimbursed, or supplies getting funded. But step back, and a larger picture comes into focus: a team that turns resources into readiness, supports crisis response and combat operations, and safeguards billions of taxpayer dollars.

Outside the military, the squadron's work is a quiet assurance that the public's money is being handled responsibly, with the systems and documentation in place to prove it.

"Every single day they do the wartime mission," Donigan said. "Our Airmen are in the fight behind the scenes, making sure those [forces] are ready and able to execute."

At Robins Air Force Base, the fight may be financed from an office, but its impact is felt wherever Airmen are called to serve.



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The International City Festival celebrates the diverse cultures, traditions, and communities that make Warner Robins unique. Featuring live entertainment, international cuisine, cultural exhibits, family activities, and local vendors, the festival welcomes thousands of residents and visitors for a day of discovery and celebration. Sponsors have the opportunity to align their brand with one of the city's most vibrant and inclusive events while connecting with a diverse audience from across Middle Georgia. Through community engagement and cultural experiences, the festival highlights Warner Robins' identity as the International City.





Defending those who defend: Robins ADC preserves mission readiness



U.S. Air Force Photo by Jasmine Braswell

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Capt. Joshua Hillman, 78th Air Base Wing Area Defense Counsel lead, poses for a portrait at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia. The ADC was established to provide vital legal support and counsel to Airmen across the installation.

By Jasmine Braswell
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

The 78th Air Base Wing Area Defense Counsel at Robins Air Force Base,

Georgia, is keeping Airmen in the fight by guarding their rights.

Similar to civilian legal counsel, the ADC is there to represent and

fight for Airmen facing investigations under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Because their services cover anything from administrative letters of

counseling to court martials, walking through the ADC door means an Airman is facing one of the most challenging days in their life.

“We have a direct impact on people’s lives,” said Capt. Joshua Hillman, 78th ABW ADC lead. “We see Airmen at their lowest, and we may be the only people in their corner to support them. We want to make sure they get constitutional representation to protect their rights.”

This commitment to protecting rights is vital during investigations and when an Airman is being court martialed. The team actively guides Airmen through stressful realities, files motions, interviews witnesses and presents evidence on their behalf to ensure the process remains fair and transparent.

“We will listen to you, and we will fight for you, but that doesn’t mean we can make things disappear,” said Hillman. “Sometimes you must own up to things, but our goal in this office is to listen to you and help fight for you to make sure your truth comes out.”

Beyond courtroom defense, the ADC offers vital administrative support for non-judicial punishments, helping Airmen draft responses to letters of reprimands, admonishments, counseling and Article 15s. Even though the ADC cannot represent Airmen in civilian court, they can help navigate the military consequences if a civilian legal issue begins to impact their military standing.

The ADC can advocate for you directly with your commander, but every situation is unique. Typically, the ADC can request to speak with unit commanders depending on what the issue is, but it is on a case-by-case basis.

“I try my best to foster those relationships on base and encourage unit commanders and shirts to reach out to me for a second, or even initial opinion on how to handle a situation,” said Hillman. “Usually, the misconduct needs to be documented in some way, and we can discuss the best way to handle that to allow the member to bounce back rather than to end their career.”

Hillman says the ADC’s goal is keeping Airmen at their desks or in their cockpits.

“These investigations can take a very long time, literally years,” said Hillman. “From the start of your investigation till the time you go to court, it will 100% put a stop sign on your career for that period. You will need someone who is there for you, can fight for you and protect your career, and that is what we are here to do.”

An Airman can contact the ADC at any point in the investigative process or for non-judicial punishments. For more information about Area Defense Counsel, call 478-468-5852.

B-2 ‘Spirit of Ohio’ returns to fleet

By Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Public Affairs

WHITEMAN AIR FORCE BASE, Mo. – A B-2 Spirit, tail number 82-1070, also known as the Spirit of Ohio, returned to operations after completing programmed depot maintenance (PDM) in Palmdale, California on June 23, 2026.

“Every single B-2 is a strategic asset, making the return of the Spirit of Ohio critical to national security,” said Col. Jason Shirley, B-2 System Program Manager with the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center’s Bombers Directorate. “Returning the aircraft to the flight line directly bolsters the number of bomb-

ers available and ensures that combatant commanders have the assets required to meet global deterrence missions, while also providing the necessary flight hours to train and maintain the readiness of our bomber aircrews.”

Without this depot-level restoration, the B-2 fleet would face severe degradation in both survivability and safety. Forgoing the work done at PDM, the aircraft would lose its Low Observable edge, rendering it vulnerable to radar and air defense systems.

Additionally, missing the structural inspections and the replacement of aging components, that take place at PDM, would drastically increase the risk of struc-

tural fatigue and system failures.

Now fully restored, the Spirit of Ohio returns an unmatched, penetrating long-range strike capability to the warfighter. Its unique combination of Low Observable (stealth) technology, massive payload capacity, and range allows it to bypass sophisticated enemy air defenses and strike heavily defended, high-value targets anywhere in the world.

As a dual-capable bomber, the aircraft can deliver both conventional and nuclear munitions, making it a credible deterrent and a cornerstone of the nation’s nuclear triad.

Futures Flight builds own autonomous aerial system

By Samuel King Jr.

EGLIN AIR FORCE BASE, Fla. – Recently, the 413th Flight Test Squadron’s Futures Flight built and flew their own autonomous unmanned aerial system into the skies east of Duke Field.

The unit, which typically supports customer-based UASs and autonomy, created one of their own with a 3-foot, 1.5-pound Aeroscout S2 remote-controlled aircraft. The team modified the aircraft by adding an

autonomous auto pilot program written by Chasen Pridgen, 413th FLTS. Amelia Lobera, 413th FLTS, designed and 3d-printed the radio mount and the GPS modules.

Then, during some remote pilot training, the team watched as Tech. Sgt. David Rasmussen, 413th FLTS, flew the autonomous take-offs and landings.

This build proved Eglin’s small team of testers mastered the UAS system design and integration to

the point where they can build, modify and successfully fly an aircraft autonomously in less than 24 hours, according to John Stotts, 413th FLTS.

“The experience gained in this innovation will go on to increase the flight safety of all UAS on the ETTC, by taking the human out of the loop for critical phases of flight,” said John Stott. “This has the added benefit of safeguarding prototype payloads that can cost millions.”



U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Eugene Oliver
A B-2 Spirit assigned to the 509th Bomb Wing flies overhead at RAF Fairford, England, Aug. 25, 2021. The B-2 flyover was part of a Bomber Task Force mission in which aircraft conduct theater and flight training across Europe and Africa. The BTF missions, which have been occurring since 2018, provide theater familiarization for aircrew members and opportunities for U.S. integration with NATO allies and regional partners. The bomber missions enhance readiness and provide the training necessary to respond to any potential crisis or challenge across the globe.



Courtesy photo

Air Force Fields next-generation Roll-On Conference Capsule



Courtesy graphic
The Roll-On Conference Capsule serves as a state-of-the-art mobile command center designed specifically to roll onto C-17 aircraft.

By Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio – The Air Force successfully fielded the new Roll-On Conference Capsule (ROCC) in March 2026, marking the official retirement of the legacy "Silver Bullet" airstream trailers and ushering in a new era of safe, secure, and modern inflight communications for government and military senior leaders.

Overseen by the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center's Mobility

Directorate, the ROCC serves as a state-of-the-art mobile command center designed specifically to roll onto C-17 aircraft.

The most significant advancement of the new system is its safety profile.

The ROCC is fully certified for personnel occupancy during all phases of flight. Achieving this critical airworthiness milestone required the program to navigate an extensive and rigorous series of safety evaluations.

"We identified all critical safety items, conducted several tests to include seat testing, crash load analy-

sis, rapid decompression, and component explosive atmosphere testing," said Derrick Grames, Deputy Program Manager for the ROCC. "All testing provided the necessary analysis and documentation required to certify airworthiness for the aircraft."

The focus on safety led to several design modifications along the way. Most notably, the team collaborated with the user to redesign the conference room layout.

Originally designed with a long, nine-seat conference table, safety evaluations revealed a potential head-

strike risk in the event of severe turbulence or a mishap.

"To mitigate risks, the change eliminated three seats and created more space by using modular workstations instead of the conference table," Grames explained.

The fully delivered ROCC system consists of two independent capsules that latch together once loaded onto the C-17, joined by a sliding pass-through door.

"One side is the senior leader suite and the other side is the conference room and staff area," said Tierra Murphy, Lead Program



U.S. Air National Guard photo by Senior Master Sgt. Mysti Blcoy
A U.S. Air Force C-17 Globemaster III piloted and crewed by the 204th Airlift Squadron, 154th Wing, Hawaii Air National Guard conducts a training sortie, Jan. 5, 2026. The ensuing flight included all aircraft types operated by the 154th Operations Group, showcasing the wing's ability to project power across the Pacific.

Manager for the ROCC. "The staff area features a large monitor and four workstations equipped with six swivel chairs. The executive suite features a private workstation, two chairs, a divan that converts into a bed, and a lavatory."

When connected to the aircraft via the Steel Eagle pallet – which required no modifications to function with the new system – the

ROCC provides its occupants with highly secure voice, data, and video teleconferencing capabilities anywhere in the world.

Despite the extensive testing, configuration changes, and extended timeline required to meet strict airworthiness standards, the team mitigated cost overruns while accommodating the needs of the program.

When the Uniform Is Hung, the Legacy Remains

By Tech. Sgt. Jasmonet D. Holmes
Air Force Life Cycle Management Center Public Affairs

WRIGHT-PATTERSON AIR FORCE BASE, Ohio (AFLCMC) -- Somewhere in her office sits a final set of orders.

After almost 34 years in uniform, countless decisions, and a career spent shaping the future of the Air Force, Lt. Gen. Donna Shipton is preparing for one final transition - not to another command, another assignment or another title - but home.

For Shipton, commander of the Air Force Life Cycle Management Center, retirement marks the close of a chapter written through service, sacrifice, leadership and people. It is a moment that offers reflection not only on what was accomplished during her tenure, but on what remains long after the stars are no longer pinned to the uniform.

Shipton officially arrived at AFLCMC in December 2023, stepping into command during a period of significant change across the Center and the acquisition enterprise. Her tenure included portfolio reoptimization, the movement of more than 500 programs across Program Executive Officer (PEO) boundaries, and the realignment of thousands of positions to better support mission needs.

Those efforts came in conjunction with challenges that tested the Center's resilience, including a civilian pay shortfall, a government shutdown, acquisition transformation efforts and major operational demands.

"When I think through the tenacity of the team to manage through that, there were folks who were sent home and didn't know if they were going to get paid," Shipton said. "There were folks who still had to come to work and didn't know if they were going to get paid. And they did it with the utmost professionalism in support of the warfighter."

To Shipton, those moments exposed more than organizational endurance. They revealed the character of the people behind the mission.

"There have been a lot of accomplishments over the last two and a half years that I've been in the seat," she said. "I'm just so proud

of the team."

But when asked what she hopes people remember about her leadership, Shipton did not point to authority, rank or position. Instead, she highlighted a style of leadership that made room for humility, care and vulnerability.

"There are many different kinds of leadership styles," she said. "I think what people often point to is the strong and the bold. But I think there is also a time to be humble, caring and even vulnerable. You can still be a great leader in the eyes of your people without always having to be strong."

That belief shaped how she led through difficult moments. Shipton said showing vulnerability was not a departure from military leadership, but a reflection of what people deserve from those entrusted to lead them.

"It showed that we cared," she said. "Yes, we are going to do what we are directed to do. That is absolutely what we do as military service. But we are going to do so in a way that is respectful of the individual, appropriate and caring at the same time."

Long before she wore three stars, Shipton was a junior officer learning what it meant to prove capability before others recognized it. One story she often returns to is her work on the GPS Block IIF program with Maj. Steve DeCou, where the two developed a program plan early in her career.

The lesson has stayed with her.

"Don't let others hold you back based upon what they think you can do," Shipton said. "Show them what you can do and lean into that."

For today's newest Airmen, junior enlisted members and civilians, she hopes that message still resonates.

As Shipton reflects on nearly 34 years of service, the Air Force core value of service before self carries a weight shaped by experience. To her, the phrase is not centered on the individual, despite the word "self" being part of it. Instead, she sees it as a call to dedicate oneself to something larger.

"Service before self is about dedication," she said. "Dedication to our Air Force, to the mission, to your organization and to your teammates."

That dedication, she said,



U.S. Air Force photo by Staff Sgt. Mikaley Kline
Gen. Duke Richardson, Air Force Materiel Command commander, passes the guidon over to Lt. Gen. Donna Shipton, Air Force Life Cycle Management Center commander, during an Assumption of Command ceremony at the National Museum of the Air Force in Dayton, Ohio, Jan. 17, 2024. Shipton previously served as the military deputy within the Office of the Assistant Secretary of the Air Force for Acquisition, Technology, and Logistics, at the Pentagon.

was worth it. But it was not without cost.

Like many who serve, Shipton and her family made sacrifices along the way. Before returning to Dayton, she spent two and a half years in Washington, D.C., while her family remained in Ohio. It was a decision made together, one they believed was right for their family at the time, but she does not minimize the weight of it.

"There was absolutely a cost," Shipton said. "Not just on me, but also on my family."

Still, as she looks back, Shipton said the Air Force gave her the opportunity to live a life of service. After years of long hours, travel and separation, returning to Dayton allowed her to close out her career surrounded by the family that had supported her throughout it.

"The Air Force returned me home to my family," she said. "Now that I am closing out my career, I can look back and say it was absolutely worth it for us."

While her professional accomplishments are many, Shipton is clear about the

one that means the most.

"My biggest life accomplishment is being a mom," she said.

Professionally, one milestone stands apart: delivering the first KC-46 Pegasus as the PEO for Tankers in January 2019 to McConnell Air Force Base, Kansas. The delivery represented years — even decades — of work by teams across the acquisition community.

"For me, being able to get that aircraft in the hands of Air Mobility Command, their pilots and their maintainers, was really important," Shipton said. "It pushed that capability forward."

Yet even in discussing major aircraft deliveries, organizational transformation and decades of service, Shipton's reflections often return to people. She remembers the laughter, the farewells, the Airmen and civilians she served next to and the losses that left a lasting mark.

As a squadron commander in Los Angeles, her team would joke that she could cry at the drop of a hat. For going-away events, they would sometimes drop a hat

just to prove the point.

Nonetheless, beneath the humor was something deeply human.

"I am very empathetic," Shipton said. "When we lose an Airman, a civilian or one of their family members, I feel their pain."

That empathy is part of the legacy she hopes remains. Not a leadership style others must mimic verbatim, but a commitment to serving others well.

If she could write a letter to every Airman who will serve after she is gone, Shipton said the first sentence would be simple.

"Dear Airman, it is an honor and privilege to support and defend the Constitution of the United States of America. Period."

And 34 years from now, when today's youngest Airmen reach their own retirements, Shipton hopes the Air Force still stands firmly on the values that have carried generations before them: integrity first, service before self, and excellence in all we do.

"I hope our Air Force is still executing against those core values in service to our nation," she said. "It is

a common bond we share across the long blue line."

Soon, the final salute will be rendered. The uniform will be hung. The title will change.

Shipton hopes what remains is not simply the memory of her time in command, but the continuation of servant leadership throughout the organization she helped guide.

"To me, it is about dedication to the Air Force, the mission, the organization and our teammates," Shipton said. "I hope I served every Airman, officer, enlisted member and civilian to the best of my ability. All across the organization, we need servant leaders."

Some careers end with a ceremony. Others leave behind a charge.

For Lt. Gen. Donna Shipton, the charge is clear: serve well, lead with care, and remember that some of the greatest things we can do are done in service to others.

"My hope is that long after I'm gone, this organization and the people will continue to do that," she said. "And I know they will."

319th Operations Group Airmen certify as Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructors



Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group pose for a photo after completing the Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, June 26, 2026. The 40-hour course provides certification as an Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor and covers techniques in Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu-based grappling, stand-up striking, weapon retention, and de-escalation.



Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group demonstrate combativeness techniques during an Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, June 25, 2026. The Basic Instructor Course prepares airmen to teach the basic-level Air Force Combatives Curriculum.



Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group attend classroom instruction during the Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, June 26, 2026. The 5-day course combined classroom instruction with hands-on application to teach fundamental combatives techniques.

By Airman 1st Class Nailah Pacheco
319th Reconnaissance Wing

GRAND FORKS AIR FORCE BASE, N.D. -- Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group completed a 40-hour Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course June 22 to 26, 2026, here.

The five-day course, led by instructors from the 5th Combat Communications Group at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, combined classroom instruction with hands-on training to develop hand-to-hand combat skills and prepare participants to safely teach fundamental combatives techniques. By bringing the course to Grand Forks AFB, the instructors provided Airmen the opportunity to complete the instructor qualification locally while helping strengthen the installation's future combatives training capability.

"We came to Grand Forks to teach the Basic Instructor Course because there wasn't an instructor here to teach it," said Staff Sgt. Parker Dickman, Air Force Combatives Program basic instructor assigned to the 5th CCG. "After completing the course, these Airmen will be able to teach the basic-level Air Force combatives curriculum."

During the course, Airmen learned offensive and defensive techniques in the classroom before applying those skills during practical training. The instructors emphasized confidence, discipline, teamwork and the warrior ethos while preparing participants to respond effectively in close-combat situations.

"The biggest thing I hope participants take away from this training is the mindset," said Senior Airman Myron Benavente, Air Force Combatives Program senior instructor assigned to the 5th CCG. "It reinforces the warrior ethos and teaches Airmen to become an asset rather than a liability."

Upon successful completion of the course, participants earned the Basic Instructor Course qualification, allowing them to support future combatives training within their units. The training also helps expand the number of qualified instructors available to sustain the program and strengthen readiness across the installation.

"It gives you the ability to teach somebody else, and it gives you exposure to how the Air Force expects you to perform and defend yourself in combat," said 1st Lt. Elizardo Sosa, RQ-4 Global Hawk Block 40 pilot assigned to the 348th Reconnaissance Squadron.

The newly qualified instructors will expand combatives training opportunities for the 319th Reconnaissance Wing, and provide more airmen access to basic warfighting skills necessary to build high-end readiness and support Department of War priorities.



Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group review course material during the Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, June 25, 2026. The Air Force Combatives Program provides close-quarters, hand-to-hand combat training to prepare airmen for the modern battlefield and real-world security encounters.



Airmen assigned to the 319th Operations Group practice combativeness techniques during an Air Force Combatives Program Basic Instructor Course at Grand Forks Air Force Base, North Dakota, June 25, 2026. The airmen participated in the 40-hour course and are now certified to teach basic combatives techniques.

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New skills course equips WR-ALC employees to eliminate waste, boost career growth



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. - Dana Stanley, Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex deputy director, is pictured with graduates of the inaugural Continuous Improvement and Innovation Skills Course at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, May 1, 2026. The fourteen students were selected from across the WR-ALC to ensure the continuous improvement efforts have an immediate, wide-spread impact.

By Joseph Mather
78th Air Base Wing Public Affairs

ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. -- Fourteen employees from across the Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, are heading back to their units with a new set of tools designed to eliminate workplace frustrations and increase warf-

ighting capacity. The group recently completed the WR-ALC's inaugural 40-hour Continuous Improvement and Innovation Skills Course, known as CI2 Skills, graduating with an average test score of 90.66. These graduates are now recognized as CI2 Green Belt practitioners trained in constraint-based management and Lean Six Sigma method-

ologies to identify inefficiencies and maximize mission throughput. Now, these Green Belt candidates are tasked with applying their new knowledge to solve real-world problems on the depot floor. For leadership and instructors, the mission of the new training is clear. "The ultimate goal is to increase warfighting capacity – to become more efficient

in our processes, so the processes are predictable and we can take on more workload," Anthony Murphy, Warner Robins Air Logistics Process Analyst and Art of the Possible Black Belt, said. This first cohort represents a broad cross-section of the complex, ensuring the continuous improvement efforts will have an immediate, wide-spread impact.

To prove their skills, the candidates will now apply what they learned to solve a specific organizational problem, capturing their results using a practical problem-solving template commonly known as an A3. A3 serves as a concise, one-page storyboard used to document and communicate the entire problem-solving process. Murphy said the class cur-

riculum is heavily focused on three major methodologies: Lean, Theory of Constraints and Six Sigma. Students also get hands-on experience with nearly two dozen tools, including value stream mapping and 5S – Sort, Set in order, Shine, Standardize and Sustain, a methodology used to organize and standardize the workplace. "By mastering these tools, employees learn how to pinpoint bottlenecks that slow down production," said Murphy. "The strategy involves the identification of a process constraint and attacking it, and to find and eliminate process waste." For the everyday ALC employee, engaging in this new culture of process improvement is about more than just corporate strategy,

it's about making daily work life smoother. By removing process waste, jobs become easier and less frustrating. The training also offers a major professional benefit to the employees who raise their hands to participate. "The CI2 skills course prepares the candidates for Green Belt Certification, which is recognized across the industry," Murphy said. This inaugural class is just the beginning of the complex's push to grow its ranks of Yellow, Green and Black Belt trained employees. The WR-ALC plans to run the course on a quarterly basis, opening the door for more employees to earn a certification, streamline their daily tasks, and help the complex support the warfighter on time and on target.



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. – Anthony Murphy, Warner Robins Air Logistics Complex Process Analyst Black Belt and Art of the Possible expert, teaches the Continuous Improvement and Innovation Skills Course at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, April 29, 2026. The 40-hour course provided employees with the academic requirements for their Green Belt Certification verifying their training in process improvement, techniques and practices.



ROBINS AIR FORCE BASE, Ga. - Students in the Continuous Improvement and Innovation Skills Course listen to a lecture at Robins Air Force Base, Georgia, April 29, 2026. Fourteen students graduated from the inaugural class and will streamline operations to increase warfighting capacity.

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