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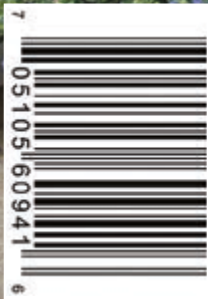
# Columbus

AND THE VALLEY

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## 5 Under 40

2018  
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## DR. JOSHUA LANE, ONE OF 30 FELLOWSHIP-TRAINED MOHS SURGEONS IN GEORGIA

Dr. Joshua Lane has devoted his professional career to the diagnosis and treatment of skin cancer. He is one of 30 fellowship-trained Mohs surgeons in the state of Georgia and the only Mohs surgeon in Columbus. Originally from Macon, Georgia, Dr. Lane completed his undergraduate studies at Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tennessee graduating magna cum laude with Honors in Biology. He attended Mercer University School of Medicine in Macon, Georgia for medical school, where he also completed a transitional internship (general surgery, plastic surgery,

internal medicine, pediatrics, emergency medicine, OB/GYN) at the Medical Center of Central Georgia. Dr. Lane completed his dermatology residency at the Medical College of Georgia. He additionally completed a one-year post-doctoral fellowship in Mohs Micrographic and Reconstructive Surgery. He is a fellow of the American Academy of Dermatology, a Fellow of the American College of Mohs Surgery and has also been elected to the prestigious Alpha Omega Alpha medical honor society. Dr. Lane also



JOSHUA LANE, M.D.

## WHAT IS MOHS SURGERY?



Mohs Micrographic surgery is the most advanced and effective treatment procedure for skin cancer available today. The procedure is performed by specially trained surgeons who have completed additional fellowship training (in addition to a three-year dermatology residency) under the tutelage of a Mohs College member.

Initially developed by Dr. Frederic Mohs, the Mohs procedure is a state-of-the-art treatment that has been continuously refined over 70 years. With the Mohs technique, physicians are able to see beyond the visible disease, to precisely identify and remove the entire tumor layer by layer while leaving the surrounding healthy tissue intact and unharmed. As the most exact and precise method of tumor removal, it minimizes the chance of re-growth and lessens the potential for scarring or disfigurement.

Because the physician is specially trained in surgery, pathology, and reconstruction, Mohs surgery has the highest success rate of all treatments for skin cancer—up to 99%. The Mohs technique is the treatment of choice for cancers on the face and other sensitive areas as it relies on the precision of a microscopic surgical procedure to

earned a Masters in Business Administration at Columbus State University and a Masters of Homeland Security from Penn State University.

Dr. Lane remains active in the academic community and serves on clinical faculty at Emory University School of Medicine, the Medical College of Georgia, and Mercer University School of Medicine. He enjoys having medical students, residents, and Mohs Micrographic surgery fellows rotate through his office. Dr. Lane has published over 125 medical and surgical publications in peer-reviewed journals, multiple book chapters in medical and surgical textbooks, and has published his own surgical textbook.

He is passionate about Mohs Micrographic Surgery and the superior benefit and result that it offers cancer patients. This technique is considered the single most effective technique for removing skin cancer (basal cell carcinoma, squamous cell carcinoma, melanoma, and many other types). An extremely precise skin cancer treatment, the Mohs surgery procedure allows Dr. Lane to remove a thin layer of tissue and immediately examine it during a patient's surgery. As a result, Dr. Lane knows exactly when tissue is free of cancer cells so that healthy tissue is not removed unnecessarily. This allows for the highest cure rate, the smallest surgical defect, and thus the best possible aesthetic outcome. Cure rates for patients with Mohs surgery are much higher than those in patients with other surgical methods. In fact, 5-year cure rates exceed 99% for first-time treatment and over 95% for recurrent skin cancers. It is the most effective and state-of-the-art procedure for the treatment of skin cancer.

Dr. Lane is the only fellowship-trained Mohs surgeon in the Columbus area and has experience in over 15,000 Mohs surgery cases and reconstructions. He treats and repairs skin cancers in any anatomic location, but takes special interest in complex cases and in those of high cosmetic and reconstructive need.



trace the edges of the cancer and ensure complete removal of all tumors down to the roots during the initial surgery.

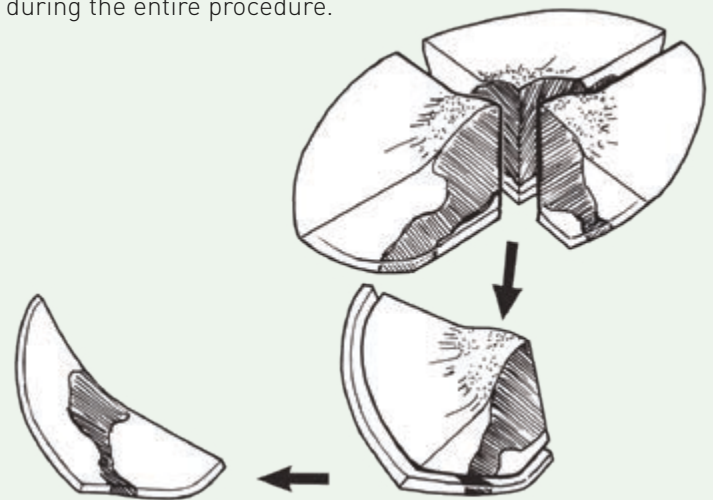
Clinical studies conducted at various national and international medical institutions demonstrate that Mohs surgery provides five-year cure rates exceeding 99% for new cancers and 95% for recurrent cancers.

The peripheral and deep surgical margins are checked during Mohs surgery as demonstrated below. This allows 100% of the margins to be checked, allowing the highest cure rate and the smallest surgical defect.

**Mohs Surgery is utilized when:**

- the cancer is located in an area where it is important to preserve healthy tissue for maximum functional and cosmetic result (face, eyelids, nose, ears, lips, fingers, toes, genitals)
- the cancer was treated previously and recurred
- scar tissue exists in the area of the cancer
- the cancer is large and/or aggressive
- the edges of the cancer are not clearly defined
- the cancer is growing rapidly or uncontrollably

Mohs surgery is usually an outpatient procedure performed in our office. Typically, it starts early in the morning and can be completed the same day, depending on the extent of the tumor and the amount of reconstruction necessary. Local anesthesia is administered around the area of the tumor so the patient is awake and comfortable during the entire procedure.



# FROM THE Editor's Desk

**A**s I read the wonderful stories Cyndy Cerbin wrote about this year's Five under 40 class, something jumped off the page at me. A couple of these young adults, well on their way to becoming 40 years-of-age, are children of friends of mine. Am I that old? Well, yes Mike, you are. But I've got to tell you, I will feel differently about the remarks I'll write to deliver at this year's Five Under 40 reception with our Young Professionals partners over at the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce.

It is particularly thrilling for me to see that all these young civic superstars are a healthy mix of star trekking millennial (going boldly where they've never been) and chips off their "old blocks." In one case, that old block is my old friend and there is something downright comforting about my growing positive belief that we are in a good place with young professionals like these stepping out onto our leadership landscape.

I read with interest the stories about how these young ones have carefully considered their moves either back here after being away or to the Columbus area for the first time after college. Hearing their measured reasoning for either choosing to live here or deciding to come back home is particularly exciting against the backdrop of other things you'll read about in this issue.

Things like On the Table. This second iteration of On the Table is on October 23, my father's birthday. Last year, On the Table's first effort to convene a civic conversation about our challenges and opportunities drew an astounding 6,500 people! I have to think that when you've got that many people willing to take some time and effort to gather around a table with folks they likely don't know for their community's greater good, that has to be a great thing.

Fall in the Chattahoochee Valley is a glorious time! So many things to do—NCAA football, bonfires on the farm, hunting trips and the anticipation of our family's annual Christmas hayride. In my humble opinion, all these things are made better when there is a healthy amount of civic engagement going on—when way more than a tiny percentage of people show up to do the work. I have encouraged civic engagement in my newspaper and magazine columns for the past quarter century and right now it feels like people are really talking. Not just sniping at each other in social media, but breaking bread and getting some face time with each other.

Which brings me to this issue's installment of "— 30 —," Mike Owen's column. He says so many things that I'm thinking right now about the state of things in our beautiful river valley. He owns our shortcomings but he is positively glowing at all the incredibly good that has been done here over the past 30 years.

Jason Isbell, maybe our country's greatest living songwriter, says it best in his song, "Something to Love." "Just find what makes you happy and do it 'til you're gone."



  
Mike Venable  
Editor



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# Columbus AND THE VALLEY

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## ON THE COVER

This year's 5 Under 40: (L-R) Chris Gray, Neely Ker-Fox, Jonathan Perkins, Jason McKenzie and Lesley Dudley

*Photo by Mike Culpepper*

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FIVE UNDER  
**40**

## CONGRATULATIONS CSU PROFESSORS!

Professors from Columbus State University are exceptional educators. They are passionate, they are creative, they are innovative. They are leaders.

This year, two of the Columbus and the Valley Rising Stars are CSU professors. Today, we watch with pride as they use their skills, knowledge, and wisdom to change this community and our world.



Dr. Chris McColough, Associate Professor, Communication



Dr. Joy Thomas, Associate Professor, Coordinator, Health Science Program, Director, Center for Health Disparities and Community-Based Research

**2018  
RISING  
STARS**

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**Lesley Dudley**  
*Senior Account Manager*

## **Congratulations Lesley!**

We are very proud of Lesley Dudley for being named to *Columbus* and the *Valley Magazine's* 5 Under 40 list.

At TSYS, we've been putting people at the center of everything we do for 35 years. Being a good neighbor and making a positive difference in our communities is the Heart of TSYS. Lesley has a heart for serving others and exemplifies the people-centered, performance-driven culture at TSYS!

**Congratulations to Lesley on this well-deserved honor!**

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This year's Five Under 40: Jason McKenzie, Lesley Dudley, Chris Gray, Neely Ker-Fox and Jonathan Perkins

# FIVE UNDER FORTY

BY CYNDY CERBIN • PHOTOS BY MIKE CULPEPPER

As our community's Baby Boomers ease into retirement, Millennials are waiting in the wings to take over their seats of leadership and influence. They're focused on the future, but are also keeping an eye on the past, well aware of the contributions of those who came before them, and of their responsibility to preserve the progress already made.

*Columbus and the Valley* magazine has again partnered with the Chamber of Commerce Young Professionals to shine a spotlight on five future leaders who aren't yet 40 years old.

We met a sales manager, a bike shop owner, a photographer, an account manager and a teaching artist who have demonstrated a dedication to service and improving the community.

This year's Five Under 40 class should be all the proof Boomers need to know their future is in good hands.



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*Congratulations on your accomplishments Neely, from your friends and family at Naurjie Multimedia.*

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# LESLEY DUDLEY 38

**H**aving studied International Business with a French focus, Lesley Dudley saw herself jetting off to a big city—maybe Paris—to build her career before eventually settling down back home in the South. But after graduation, she and husband-to-be Nick decided to start their lives together in his hometown of Columbus, where Lesley also had family roots.

She got a job at TSYS and quickly rose through its ranks. As a senior account manager, she is responsible for servicing some of the payment provider’s biggest clients, including one in Canada.

“So I still get to go to lots of cool places,” she said. “But I love Columbus. I love how it has evolved. I love how we’re embracing the mill town history, that we’re not just leveling these old buildings. I love that.”

Lesley points out a piece of that history when clients come to Columbus. She takes them to TSYS’ fourth floor where, hidden behind the building’s gleaming modern facade, are wooden floors salvaged from the old textile mill that once stood on the site. “And of course TSYS was spun off of CB&T, which was founded because of the mills,” she points out.

When she’s not working, traveling or taking daughter Amelia to gymnastics, dance or soccer, Lesley is volunteering.

“My dad worked 32 years for United Way, so I grew up in his office in Birmingham. So when I started my career, the first thing I looked at was how to be a part of United Way here.”

She started as a loaned executive, helping other businesses organize their United Way fundraising efforts. She then got involved with the community investment process, which determines how donations are invested. She now serves on the Community Investment Board, leading other volunteers and evaluating the agencies’ use of their funding.

Lesley appreciates the purpose United Way serves, not only for the agencies that benefit from the community’s contributions, but for citizens looking for ways to give back.

“There are so many agencies in the community that do so many different things,” she said. “Agencies that help young underprivileged children get additional educational support, those that help the mentally ill, those that help the homeless. It’s like, who am I to decide who my donations go to? There’s so much and I can’t choose just one. I appreciate that United Way helps support all of them.”

**HOMETOWN:**  
HOOVER, ALABAMA

**FAMILY:**  
HUSBAND, NICK; DAUGHTER, AMELIA, 5

**OCCUPATION:**  
SENIOR ACCOUNT MANAGER, TSYS

**EDUCATION:**  
HOOVER HIGH SCHOOL;  
BS INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS,  
AUBURN UNIVERSITY;  
MBA, UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

Through United Way, Lesley also volunteers with the Read United project, supporting children who aren’t yet reading at their grade level. Just one year in, she says the project has posted impressive results. And she’s involved with Emerging Leaders United, an organization that encourages the under-40 crowd to commit to volunteerism.

It was through United Way that Lesley discovered her other passion—Girls, Inc. She’s already been tapped to be its president in 2019. Her role is to make sure the centers have the resources they need to help girls navigate barriers and reach their full potential. Classes teach everything from plumbing to computer coding.

“Studies show that young girls are more themselves when they’re among girls,” Lesley noted. “When boys are around, they’re a little bit hindered, a little bit shyer. So it’s a place for girls to be with each other, learn new things, work on sports, learn to be independent and strong, smart and bold women.”

Lesley would like to see Columbus put even more emphasis on helping its low-income families. And on the lighter side of her wish list would be more shopping options Uptown and a high-speed train linking Columbus and Atlanta.

But Lesley does not regret trading in jet setting for a comfortable life in Columbus. “It’s funny—and this may not sound like something someone under 40 would say—but it’s funny how fast life goes by. I’ve been here 17 years, married 15 years. But it’s been good. I like where I’m heading. And I love raising Amelia here.”

### LAST BOOK READ

*WRITTEN IN MY OWN HEART’S BLOOD*, BY DIANA GABALDON  
“I DON’T GET A LOT OF READING TIME. BUT I TAUGHT MYSELF HOW TO RUN ON THE TREADMILL WITH MY KINDLE.”



### FAVORITE MOVIE

*TOMBSTONE, BREAKFAST CLUB, 16 CANDLES*



### FUN

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**Congratulations  
Dr. Joy Thomas!**

2018  
Rising Star



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For her efforts in bridging gaps in community health disparity, Dr. Thomas is currently serving as the Director of the Center for Health Disparity and Community - Based Research. Thomas and her staff have recently expanded to providing support to 28 counties in 2018 from the 16 counties previously served. The work of the center opens learning opportunities for her students in the classroom and through individual internships. The staff and faculty of Columbus State's College of Education and Health Professions are very proud of this great honor for Dr. Joy Thomas.

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**CHRIS GRAY 33**

**HOMETOWN:**  
BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

**FAMILY:**  
HAS FAMILY THROUGHOUT THE SOUTH

**OCCUPATION:**  
INDUSTRIAL SALES MANAGER,  
GEORGIA POWER

**EDUCATION:**  
CLAY CHALKVILLE HIGH SCHOOL;  
BS AND MS MECHANICAL ENGINEERING, UAB;  
PHD CIVIL ENGINEERING, UAB AND UAH

**T**aped to the wall above Chris Gray’s computer are full-sheet printouts of numbers, a dollar sign and a couple of commas. The industrial sales manager for Georgia Power says everyone should focus on their goals every day, whether the goal is personal or professional.

“If you don’t, you’ll never get it,” he said.

Leading a team of 14 account managers spread out across Georgia, Chris is responsible for taking care of hundreds of the state’s largest utility customers. He says most of his team members are older than him and have far more experience. “I know exactly who I work for,” he said. “I work for them. I don’t meddle. I’m there to knock down barriers when I can, but at the end of the day, I let them do what they’re good at.”

Chris isn’t just being modest when he talks about team members being more experienced than him. His background is in engineering, not sales. But after 11 years researching and developing new energy efficient technologies for Southern Company, Chris was itching for a change. He wanted to see his company’s work through a new lens and made the move to sales.

“I’d checked off enough boxes. I felt like I was ready for a new challenge.”

That approach is likely to drive many new surprising career moves before Chris is done.

“Something I’ve realized about myself is that I don’t really know what I want to do. I know what I’m interested in, I know I enjoy making a difference, but that doesn’t mean I’m defined by any one thing that I am. I feel like I’m fluid and adaptable to any situation, and so who I want to be and what I want to be might change. I’m comfortable with that. I’m comfortable with the uncomfortable.”

Whatever he tries next, Chris says it will have to present a challenge. “I don’t want a role I can step into and do immediately. I want a role I can grow into, because that’s how you learn. When you’re forced out of your comfort zone, that’s when you adapt, that’s when you learn.”

Chris’s love of learning is reflected in his journey through higher education. A self-described nerd, Chris always wanted to be an engineer, although he didn’t know why. But he excelled in school and became the first from his family to go to college. After he earned an undergraduate degree, his employer urged him to keep going. He got his master’s, and still didn’t stop. He completed his PhD, the highest degree he could get in his field. “I did that for me,” he said. “Just to prove that I could.”

Chris has been in Columbus about two-and-a-half years. Volunteering gave him a good way to learn the community and give back at the same time. He loves the energy of Uptown and jumps at the chance to help out with events, whether it’s serving food and drinks, hauling stuff or cleaning up. He also volunteers with United Way; last year he was on the campaign cabinet. And he volunteers with Young Professionals, serving on its board and promoting the organization’s activities to the city’s young professionals.

Chris loves the “big small town” feel of Columbus, where it’s large enough to offer lots to do, but small enough to get to know the players. He’s worried about the level of poverty here, but he’s impressed with the number of young people who are eager to give their time and attention to solving the city’s problems.

“There are so many bright, brilliant young leaders in Columbus that are going to end up transforming this city. You just know they’re going to make this city special. Combine that with the river and all the development that’s going on and the servant leadership view and you know each of those next generation players are going to make this city a shining example of what the South can be.”

There’s little doubt Chris will be one of those players ... if we can keep him. “I work hard, I play hard. I believe in being a kind person, and I believe in giving back, because if we all did that, the world wouldn’t have any problems.”

**LAST BOOK READ**

*FANTASYLAND: HOW AMERICA WENT HAYWIRE,*  
BY KURT ANDERSEN

**FAVORITE MOVIE**

*SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*

**FUN**

BUILDING THINGS FOR HIS HOUSE, RIDING A MOTORCYCLE, TARGET SHOOTING, HUNTING, EXERCISE, CONCERTS, HANGING OUT WITH FRIENDS



Georgia Power congratulates our own

# Dr. Chris Gray

for his selection as one of  
*Columbus and the Valley's* Five under 40.



## Georgia Power

*We are really proud of Chris, and appreciate all he does for our community and our company.*

Congratulations to  
**Jonathan Perkins**

on being named one of  
*Columbus and the Valley's*

**Five Under  
40!**



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## Jason McKenzie • 2018'S TOP 5 UNDER 40



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AND LAUGH ELEVATE  
THOSE AROUND YOU.**

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SPIRIT IS PEGGED  
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# NEELY KER-FOX 33

**HOMETOWN:**  
COLUMBUS

**FAMILY:**  
HUSBAND, WES; DAUGHTER, FINLEY, 6;  
SON, ALDEN, 4

**OCCUPATION:**  
PHOTOGRAPHER

**EDUCATION:**  
HARDAWAY HIGH SCHOOL;  
BA ADVERTISING, UNIVERSITY OF GEORGIA

**T**he first time Neely Ker-Fox photographed a new mom’s labor and delivery—while pregnant herself—was an awakening.

“It was like seeing behind the curtain of Oz,” she recalled. Not only did it give her a glimpse into her own future, it revealed to her the power of birth photography.

Her client was a woman who’d lost her first baby. Neely had grieved with her over the loss and quickly agreed to bring her camera into the delivery room for the second child’s birth. “I don’t know if I can quantify how much those photos meant to them, and how much healing they brought,” she said.

The experience led Neely to step back from her lucrative wedding photography business and refocus on this new, little-known specialty. It started slowly. “I had to convince people this was something they wanted, and would want to pay for, and they would have to let me into the most intimate day of their life. It was a hard mountain to climb.”

But moms-to-be got wind of it and started lining up. Neely’s calendar was full with vague assignments. That’s the problem with birth photography: babies rarely come when they’re supposed to. So, she was “on call” two weeks before a due date and one week after. It was more demanding than wedding photography, but more rewarding.

“I realized I don’t like creating a moment, I like anticipating a moment. And that’s what I get with birth photography. It’s completely and utterly unpredictable.”

And completely unlike anything she ever imagined doing. Neely describes herself as the child who would sympathetically throw up when she saw someone else get sick. And now, in-between shutter clicks, she’s holding IV poles, doing lower back compressions and calming apprehensive moms. She says capturing the “wow” moments is only part of the prize.

“What keeps me coming back is loving on these moms, and knowing I’m making a difference by being there for them, and not just photographically.”

Besides handholding, Neely educates her clients about their options. For instance, she recently discovered other hospitals using clear drapes during C-sections, which allowed moms to see their baby’s birth and encouraged quicker bonding. That option is now available to local moms, too.

Neely educated people all over the world recently with a personal project she called Perfect Imperfections. In it, women posed for her, often with their children, in only their underwear. The goal was to empower them—and all women—to accept and embrace their bodies, no matter how imperfect. The project touched hearts around the globe. National media shared the story and women all over the world asked to be part of

the project. Neely donated proceeds from the project to Clement Arts for foster and adoptive care programs. [See related story on page 60.]

Neely’s work went viral a second time when she captured the shocked expression of a mom who’d just discovered her newborn baby was a boy—the first male baby in her family for more than 50 years.

She says the attention she got from these stories was not always good—“the internet can be a pretty ugly place,” she said—but it has also bolstered what she hopes will be her legacy: that the impact she’s had on women in her community reaches far beyond Columbus.

In fact, the international birth photography community is now reaching out to Neely to share her expertise in articles and at conferences. This new focus on education is allowing Neely to spend more time with her family, something she’s been craving for several years.

Despite the demands of her profession, Neely is committed to homeschooling her two young children. She likes exposing them to the hidden corners of Columbus, the town she grew up in and loves. “It feels a lot like family here. People have big, tender hearts and will rally around people when they need it.” She likes that there is plenty to do here, but she wishes there were more green space and arts opportunities for kids.

But rather than complain, Neely says she’ll take a cue from her dad, marketing and advertising executive Bill Becker. “It’s easy to be a keyboard warrior, but you can’t expect the community to change unless you’re willing to get out there and make it better. I’ve watched him fight his whole life to make Columbus better, and I hope I can do as good a job as he has.”

## LAST BOOK READ

BOSSY PANTS, BY TINA FEY



## FAVORITE MOVIE

THE PRINCESS BRIDE OR THE THREE AMIGOS “I GREW UP WATCHING THOSE TWO MOVIES WITH MY BROTHER, RECITING THE LINES, SINGING THE SONGS.”



## FUN

PLAYING WITH THE KIDS, GOING TO PARKS, EXPLORING NATURE

# WILLIAM L. BROWN FARM MARKET

Fresh and local. Those are the key words for the William L. Brown Farm Market. The produce market has opened a location in Columbus in the old Stevie Bs restaurant in Harmony Place.

## THE FARM

The Brown family has been farming since the 1700s and William L. Brown and his wife Debra founded the produce market in 1966. At first, just peaches were sold out of a trailer parked under a pecan tree in an orchard next to highway 49. The business grew and in the 80s the family built a covered shed and added tomatoes, cucumbers and peppers to their offerings. In 2006, a store was built in Montezuma with a kitchen and more diverse offerings. In addition to the produce, flowers, homemade peach ice cream and peach baked goods are sold in the Montezuma store.

Since it takes sun light to produce natural sugar and sugar which boosts the flavor, the Browns' fruits and vegetables are vine and tree ripened. Many old fashioned varieties that aren't offered in grocery chains are also available in Brown Farm Markets because they have the best quality and taste.

The farm now covers 3,500 acres in Macon County, nearly 100 of that in tomatoes alone. There are peach orchards and row crops as well. They have a shelling operation and offer shelled peas and butterbeans.

## THE MARKET MOVES TO COLUMBUS

In June, the William L. Brown Farm Market opened in Harmony Place in Columbus with a wide variety of fresh vegetables trucked from the Montezuma family farm almost every day. Witt, the sixth generation of Browns in the family business, is running the Columbus location.

"Everything in here we grow except the Vidalia onions," Brown says. That includes, squash, corn, cucumbers, peppers, okra, and of course the family's core crops of peaches and tomatoes.

They also have a large selection of private labeled salad dressings, jams, relishes, honey and syrup bottled in Georgia. The mayhaw jelly is a particularly popular product.

Brown says business here has been good.



They already had a large customer base in the Columbus area that would drive an hour and a half to Montezuma. He says the biggest problem to date has been people finding their location in Harmony Place in the old Stevie B's.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

Brown says they have discovered that Columbus wants more variety and so they plan to diversify but still keep the produce locally grown. "We try to have all Georgia grown produce from famers we know personally and have seen their farm," he says.

They currently bring in homemade ice cream from the kitchen in Montezuma but Brown hopes to have the kitchen in Columbus operational in a few months. They are selling in bulk to several area restaurants but hope to continue to increase that commercial business. Volume sales can be accommodated with fresh produce trucked in the next day and so customers can buy anything from one tomato to 5 pallets.

The Browns plan to stay open 9 to 10 months out of year: in the summer, spring and fall. This fall they expect to offer seasonal products like pumpkins, apples and gourds.

"Getting involved with local business and the community around us is what we are all about," Brown says and points to participation in a recent benefit for autism. In Montezuma, the market schedules local bands and the desire is to bring that here as well.

In addition to community involvement, the family is committed to providing "the highest quality farm fresh produce from our farm to your family."



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# JASON MCKENZIE 34

**HOMETOWN:**  
COLUMBUS AND LEESBURG, GA

**FAMILY:**  
PARENTS, BETH AND O.T. MCKENZIE,  
BROTHERS, EDDIE, JEFFREY AND SHON

**OCCUPATION:**  
CO-OWNER, RIDE ON BIKES

**EDUCATION:**  
DEERFIELD-WINDSOR HIGH SCHOOL;  
ABA, DARTON COLLEGE;  
BA MARKETING, CSU

**J**ason McKenzie says he likes to be chafed, which is a good thing, considering how much time he spends on a bicycle.

But the co-owner of Ride on Bikes is talking about something else. He's talking about his addiction to hard work. "I want to be hungry. I want to be tired. As long as I know what it is I'm working for—that there's a clear goal and a greater good will come from it—it's worth every second."

Jason got his drive and work ethic from his parents, both entrepreneurs. He worked awhile for his dad doing underground utility work, making good money but feeling unfulfilled.

"I didn't feel like I was making a difference, which I realize now was one of the biggest things dragging me down."

Today, Jason owns half of Ride on Bikes, a shop which his uncle Buddy Nelms dreamed up after discovering there was no one in Uptown serving the cycling community. He sells bikes, of course, but he also donates bicycles, builds custom bikes for special needs riders, provides free bike rentals to special needs programs and holds charity events. Even his popular Tuesday night community bike ride has become so much more than a bike ride. He tells the story of a young woman who thanked him one night. Because of the free rides, she was losing weight, feeling better and starting to save money to buy her own bike. And most importantly, she said the ride had given her marriage a needed boost.

"If that's not worth getting up to go to work for, I don't know what is," he said. "The bike shop is a vehicle for changing lives."

Jason's own life changed in ways he never could have imagined. Seven years ago, his wife Natalie committed suicide.

"Honestly, by now I thought I'd be living the American dream. Have a house with a picket fence and two-and-a-half kids, coaching the little league team. But those weren't the cards I was dealt," he said.

It took Jason a long time to come to terms with his loss, but he came out the other side more compassionate, patient and understanding.

"When you go through a tragedy, you have a decision to make. I could have gone dark and everyone would have understood, no one would have blamed me. Or, you can turn it into something positive. I still have bad days, but if I don't turn this into something good, then she would have died in vain, and that's not an option."

Jason says he's also learned that life is hard for everybody. "So, when I see someone I admire, I'm even more inspired because I know they haven't had it easy."

The list of people Jason admires is long. Besides his parents, there's his uncle Buddy, whose footprint is all over the re-imagined Uptown. He credits longtime community leaders for making Columbus what it is today, and challenges his generation to take up the torch.

"It would be easy to drop the ball, but we have people like Jason Gamache, Garrett Lawrence, Chris Woodruff, Reynolds Bickerstaff. We have been given something that is growing right now. It has been set up for us. But if I don't handle it correctly, that's on me. Shame on me. That's disrespecting all the people that came before us and did all the hard work."

Jason likes Columbus for what he calls a perfect mix of low living expenses and high potential. He's calling on peers to spread the word. "When we see a story like the one about the biker who rescued the injured dog, it inspires you to become a better person. Stories like that breed confidence in your community and its people." Although Jason sometimes thinks he'd like to live in Boulder, Colorado—a young, hip town where everyone shares his love of outdoors—he says he'd rather bring that vibe to Columbus, a town where he can afford to do anything he wants.

Wherever he lives, this "go big or go home" kind of guy will keep taking chances and evolving. He's seen what's happened to those who don't. "I refuse to be the Blockbuster of the Netflix story," he tells his employees.

As for his future, Jason realizes the sky's the limit. "The Wright brothers started in a bike shop and they wound up changing the world," he said. "I've got the bike shop."

**LAST BOOK READ**  
THE ALCHEMIST, BY PAULO COELHO

**FAVORITE MOVIE**  
THE PEACEFUL WARRIOR

**FUN**  
BIKING, MOTORCYCLING, FLYING AIRPLANES, TINKERING ON HIS CAR  
"ME AND MY DOG, IN THAT '64 CHEVROLET WITH THE TOP DOWN, RIDING  
AROUND AT NIGHT WITH THE DOG'S HEAD IN MY LAP. IT'S JUST GOLD."

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# JONATHAN PERKINS 38

**HOMETOWN:**  
COLUMBUS

**FAMILY:**  
SINGLE, NO CHILDREN

**OCCUPATION:**  
DIRECTOR OF MARKETING  
AND COMMUNICATIONS,  
NATIONAL CIVIL WAR NAVAL MUSEUM

**EDUCATION:**  
SHAW HIGH SCHOOL;  
BS COMMUNICATIONS,  
GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

**W**hen Jonathan Perkins was a little boy, he'd tell people he wanted to be a fire truck when he grew up. Not a fireman, a fire truck. No one told him otherwise. And that acceptance of who he was and what he wanted to be gave him the courage to do anything, and to give other kids that same license.

Jonathan's "day job" is director of marketing and communications at the National Civil War Naval Museum. Right now he's working on re-branding the museum to attract younger audiences, being careful to craft the right message.

"We tell a difficult side of history here, but it's an important side. This is not the Civil War many people think of. There were so many technological advancements, so many unsung heroes, people of color who played major important roles. So we use the museum to open up dialogue and discussion."

Encouraging dialogue is what Jonathan does in his other job, too. He's a teaching artist, coaching kids in creative writing and performance. He's taught kids in drama camp and kids from juvenile drug court. He's been to alternative schools in Boise and Baton Rouge, is going to Memphis to do a workshop at the National Civil Rights Museum and will spend 14 weeks this year teaching inmates in Alabama State Prisons. He says all his students have something in common.

"The only thing these young people need is an ear. Just an ear. It doesn't have to be hundreds of ears, just enough to know that somebody hears you. We all need an outlet, and we all need second chances. Some of these kids are carrying a lot. They're dealing with some really dark things. They don't need to be yelled at, they don't need to be hit, they just need to talk and to have someone listen."

Jonathan's writing workshops will cover everything from gun violence to Beyoncé to trans identities, depending on what's on the kids' minds. "We can learn so much from these young people if we just sit back and listen," he said.

Jonathan founded the Fountain City Poetry Slam seven years ago. Open mic nights let kids outgrow their shyness and intimidation.

"I think Fountain City Coffee is changing a lot of 'can'ts' into cans. The kids come back and tell me this was the most valuable experience they've had—discovering their voice and realizing that they can effect change in their community. It's so therapeutic. It's so beautiful, to see these young people oftentimes hearing their own voice for the very first time."

It was Jonathan's mom, a Muscogee County educator, who heard him first. She recognized his creative talents and nurtured them. She would introduce him to friends as "her artist child." At age 8, during summer vacations at his grandmother's house in

Florida, he would write and direct plays and perform them with his little sister.

Later, Jonathan's mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease, and he became her caregiver. Writing poetry is what got him through the darkest days.

Jonathan designs his award-winning performances to get people talking. Although he uses comedy—riffing on stereotypes of black people always being late or a black man who can't dance—he's looking for more than laughter. "Racism is often the pink, yellow, orange or green elephant in the room, and we need to talk about it."

Jonathan applauds Columbus for fueling difficult conversations with its On the Table project, where people meet people from different walks of life and open themselves up to new points of view (see related story on page 69). Where Columbus may be falling down, he says, is in economic development. While business is booming Uptown and in north Columbus, he says, there are empty storefronts in neighborhoods that need the most support.

Jonathan says he "never in a million years" imagined coming back to Columbus after college. "As an aspiring actor and performer, you're kind of programmed to go to L.A. or New York. But I have managed to have those opportunities right here. I'm a southern boy, I love the South, I love Columbus. This city has nurtured me and loved on me and supported me for 37 years, and I'm happy to be at a place where I can pay it forward to the next Jonathan that's growing up on the east side of Columbus that just wants to be heard."

**LAST BOOK READ**  
*BUTTERFLY BURNING*, BY  
YVONNE VERA

**FAVORITE MOVIE**  
*THE SHAWSHANK REDEMPTION*

**FUN**  
READING, LISTENING TO MUSIC, GOING TO CONCERTS, TRAVELING,  
SPENDING TIME WITH NIECES AND NEPHEWS, DISCOVERING NEW  
RESTAURANTS. "WHENEVER I TRAVEL, I CHECK OUT *DINERS, DRIVE-INS*  
*AND DIVES* TO SEE WHERE I SHOULD EAT."

# RISING STARS



## JOY THOMAS, 39

**OCCUPATION:** ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR HEALTH SCIENCE AND DIRECTOR OF THE CENTER FOR HEALTH DISPARITIES AND COMMUNITY BASED RESEARCH, COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

**FAMILY:** HUSBAND, BRANDON; CHILDREN, BAILEY AND BRYSON

**HOMETOWN:** JACKSONVILLE, FLORIDA

**EDUCATION:** SANDALWOOD HIGH SCHOOL, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA CHARLOTTE, GEORGIA SOUTHERN UNIVERSITY

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** LIVE HEALTHY COLUMBUS, BREATHE EASY COLUMBUS, BOYS AND GIRLS CLUBS OF THE CHATTAHOOCHEE VALLEY, NEW HORIZONS COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD, MISSION CONTINUES VETERANS SERVICE GROUP

## MARGARET MOSS, 36

**OCCUPATION:** QUALIFYING BROKER, BOWDEN REALTY

**FAMILY:** HUSBAND, JEREMIAH; CHILDREN, SAWYER AND SLOANE

**HOMETOWN:** PHENIX CITY

**EDUCATION:** SMITHS STATION HIGH SCHOOL, UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** CHILDREN & FAMILY CONNECTION OF RUSSELL COUNTY, PHENIX CITY YOUTH BASEBALL, RELAY FOR LIFE/RUSSELL COUNTY, CRISIS CENTER OF RUSSELL COUNTY, RUSSELL COUNTY CHILD ADVOCACY CENTER, PTO PRESIDENT - WEST SMITHS STATION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, EPWORTH UNITED METHODIST CHURCH, EAST ALABAMA CHAMBER OF COMMERCE EMERGING LEADERS, PHENIX CITY HABITAT FOR HUMANITY



## CHRIS MCCOLLOUGH, 36

**OCCUPATION:** ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR, COMMUNICATION, COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY

**FAMILY:** WIFE, JENNIFER; DAUGHTER, ABBY

**HOMETOWN:** STAFFORD, VIRGINIA

**EDUCATION:** BROOKE POINT HIGH SCHOOL, VIRGINIA TECH UNIVERSITY, LOUISIANA STATE UNIVERSITY

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** CONSULTS WITH CSU'S NON-PROFIT AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT (NPAGE) CENTER AIDING LOCAL CHARITIES, CIVIC ORGANIZATIONS AND SMALL BUSINESSES

## ISIAH HARPER, 37

**OCCUPATION:** TEACHER, NORTHSIDE HIGH SCHOOL, WRITER

**FAMILY:** SINGLE, NO CHILDREN

**HOMETOWN:** COLUMBUS

**EDUCATION:** HARDAWAY HIGH SCHOOL, FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY, TROY UNIVERSITY

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** TOGETHER 2017 POET, "MY RIVER VALLEY," GIRLS INC., ST. THOMAS EPISCOPAL CHURCH CHOIR, RIVERCENTER FOR THE PERFORMING ARTS, THE COLUMBUS BALLET, THE COLUMBUS JAZZ SOCIETY



## STEVEN I. CHAMBERS, 29

**OCCUPATION:** RETAIL MARKET MANAGER FOR SYNOVUS FINANCIAL CORP.

**FAMILY:** WIFE, LAUREN; DAUGHTER, ELLIE ELIZABETH-GRACE

**HOMETOWN:** MILITARY FAMILY THAT MOVED AROUND THE U.S., BUT CALLS COLUMBUS HOME

**EDUCATION:** KENDRICK HIGH SCHOOL, COLUMBUS STATE UNIVERSITY, TROY UNIVERSITY

**COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT:** UNITED SPINAL ASSOCIATION INC., VALLEY HEALTHCARE, ARBOR GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH



# CHARM OF YESTERYEAR

SMALL TOWN BUSINESSES KEEP  
CUSTOMERS COMING BACK.

Stepping into Mathews' Supply in Seale, Alabama, is like stepping back in time. The nostalgia greets you at the entrance where there is an RC drink machine with the most refreshing cold drinks. (I should know. I recommend Peach!) If after you have paid your 50 cents, the drink doesn't make its way out of the shoot, just reach down and give the flap on the machine a little push, and the drink will appear. The building itself is much older than the '80s drink machine. It's an old garage made of tin and wood, and inside you can purchase anything from fertilizer to a radiator.

"We try. I mean you have to be diversified," said owner Samuel Mathews. "We have just about every kind of hardware to go into a home except for the electronic line. I don't have much as far as computers. We do have some electrical things."

The tech free inventory makes perfect sense. Everything about Mathews' Supply is old school, and that's the reason Mathews' has loyal repeat customers. Folks say the store always has what they need.

"It's the convenience for one thing and customer service like you don't find at other stores," said John Floyd. "They understand what you're talking about or needing without having the aid of a computer," he continued with a laugh. "Today I was looking for a part for a weed eater, and they found it. It's organized chaos here. I don't see how Mrs. Mary (Samuel's wife) keeps track of it, but she always finds it. I've never been here where she hadn't found something within five minutes or less."





When asked if he knew where everything was in the store, Samuel replied, “No ma’am. I try to know where everything is. Mary pretty much knows though. She tricked me one day. I was looking for something that had been on the same shelf for 20 years. She moved it two shelves down, and I couldn’t find it.”

“I know where everything is until I move it and hide it from myself,” said Mary. “If I get in a bind, I ask him. I don’t really know the mechanics stuff like he does.”



Mary Mathews checks out a customer by completing a handwritten receipt for an order.

Samuel is knowledgeable about auto mechanics because the origins of Mathews’ Supply began with mechanics. He says his grandfather, Harvey Paul Mathews, had a business working on horse carriages and wagons in the ‘20s and began working on automobiles in the ‘30s.

Three local doctors owned the first cars in Seale and came to his grandfather for maintenance and repairs. The business was located downtown, but he doesn’t remember what it was called at the time. Mathews says his father, Paul Mathews, started Mathews’ Automotive in 1950 and eventually moved it to its current location. He says they still have a few automobile parts in the store but not as much as they used to, and he decided years ago to change the name to Mathews’ Supply.

“I do have a lot of stuff that’s odd or old and that’s what makes Mathews’ Supply Mathews’ Supply,” he explained.

“It’s a service to the community. That’s what Daddy always said. He said you ain’t figuring on getting rich. People come in here with a problem, and if I can help them, they don’t have to drive all the way

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to town. I just enjoy being of service to the community.”

The small town charm that makes Mathews’ Supply a staple in the community can also be found at another business in Russell County. Susie’s Fort Mitchell Grill, located at 981 Highway 165 Fort Mitchell arguably has some of the best burgers around. When you walk through the door, you are greeted by the man who started it all, Jim Durfy.

“Everybody calls me grandpa,” he said. “I have 72 grandchildren and great grandchildren – four generations.”

Durfy and his family are originally from Florida and have a strong family history rooted in the food industry.

“My father, my grandfather, and my great-grandfather were all bakers. They owned bakeries. At 9 years old, I would ride my bicycle three and a half miles to the bakery before going to school and work from 4 a.m. to 9 a.m. Then, I got on a bus for a nickel and went to school. When school got out at 3, I would go back to the bakery.”

Durfy owned a restaurant called the Rainbow Café for 50 years in Florida. He and his wife have 10 children, and they all grew up working at the restaurant.

“All my kids worked for me,” he said. “My daughter kept hounding me to sell the restaurant and move. In 2005, we sold everything. We already owned a house here in Alabama, so here we are.”

Susie’s Fort Mitchell Grill is complete with retro décor that’s reminiscent of an episode of *Happy Days*. There’s even a game room and play area for children. The atmosphere is sure to get



Samuel and Mary Mathews stand in front of their store, Mathews’ Supply in Russell County

you in the mood for a good home cooked meal, and the menu does not disappoint.

“We’re known for our Benning burger,” said Durfy. “A Benning burger is 11 ounces of meat, and it comes with French fries, lettuce, tomato and coleslaw. Burgers are our most popular items here. We have about 14 different ones on the menu and six different salads. We also have schnitzel, both chicken and pork, and there’s ribeye steak. A lot of things listed are from our Florida menu. We’ve had

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(Above) Soldiers Luke Smith, Tucker Thistle and Mathew Vannostern enjoy some time together while waiting on the check at Susie's Fort Mitchell Grill.



(Right) It's a family affair: (Back row) Cathy Givens, Jim Durfy, Susie Durfy, Susie's oldest son, Jaden, and Jim's grandson, Travis Durfy. (Front) Susie's youngest son, Ian.

many years of trial and error to know what works.”

Visitors come from all around to get a taste of the cuisine at the grill, including many soldiers from Fort Benning. They say the grill is the perfect spot to get a meal that reminds them of home.

“I had the meatloaf,” said Staff Sgt. Tucker Thistle. “That’s my third time having it, so I believe it has become my go to.”

“It’s got that home cooked feel to it,” said Staff Sgt. Mathew Vannostern. “The price is good and the food is great. It saves me from making a mess of my own kitchen.”

Durfy says he wants to continue to serve customers for generations to come, and he’s confident that someone among his offspring will keep it going. Several of his children and grandchildren are involved in the business now. His daughter, Susie, is the lead owner of the grill and spends much of her time in the kitchen preparing the food.

“I have no doubt that it will continue,” said Durfy. “Once you get in the food business, you’ll always have a job. You may not make top dollar, but you always make enough to eat.”

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# Swiftly Speaking

BY BRETT BUCKNER

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For those seeking an innovative new career, the options are literally at your fingertips every second of every day.

Whether it's shooting zombies in a post-apocalyptic video game, checking the score on the Iron Bowl, watching the latest *Star Wars* trailer or following the confirmation hearings of a Supreme Court justice nominee, there's an app for that.

Never has that famed slogan, first coined and since trademarked by Apple for its iPhone 3G back in 2009, been more prescient. With upwards of 95 percent of Americans owning cell phones and 77 percent owning smartphones (up from 35 percent in 2011), according to the Pew Research Center for Internet and Technology, an unfathomable amount of our information and entertainment comes from cell phone apps.

Someone has to build and maintain all of those apps. That's why app development, a career that didn't exist a decade ago, has become one of the most

competitive and potentially lucrative job markets with a starting salary of \$75,000 a year. Jobs for app developers and programmers will have increased by 32 percent from 2010 through 2020.

To meet the demand and inspire others to pursue a career in computer technology, Chattahoochee Valley Community College [CVCC] is offering a certificate in App Development with Swift, using curriculum designed by Apple engineers and educators. The app-development course, which started this fall, includes three classes that will teach students of all ages and computer-based skills how to code and design fully functional apps for mobile devices.

“THE IDEA IS THAT YOU DON'T NEED ANY BACKGROUND IN COMPUTER SCIENCE TO START IN THIS COURSE. IT STARTS VERY SIMPLY—ALMOST WITH DRAG-AND-DROP TYPE PROGRAMMING AND BUILDS FROM THERE”

- AURILIA SMITH

“The idea is that you don't need any background in computer science to start in this course,” explained Aurilia Smith, one of two CVCC instructors who will be teaching the course. “It starts very simply—almost with drag-and-drop type programming, and builds from there.

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of Swift programming language since it was first introduced by Apple in 2014. Using the Swift Playground, developers can write code and see the results as soon as code is written. Swift can be used for basic apps, like social networking, or advanced 3D games.

Swift has quickly become one of the most popular programming languages. Airbnb, Kayak and Yelp are some of the most recognizable apps to be created using Swift. Apple first started teaching the language in high schools around the world in 2016 as part of the company's Everyone Can Code initiative, and it has been since been updated for the college and university setting.

"I've been really impressed with what I've seen so far," Smith said.

Smith and her CVCC colleagues first learned about the Swift App Development program at a recent conference for community colleges across the state of Alabama. The CVCC table was next to representatives from Wallace Community College in Hanceville, who were discussing their recent launch of the Swift Application Development program, the first college in the state to offer it.

"We knew right away that this was something we wanted to get behind," Smith said. "It sounded like a real opportunity for our students."

Within the next few weeks, a letter arrived, bringing with it that very opportunity.

In fact, starting in the fall, every community college in Alabama offers the Swift curriculum. Along with Wallace, Southern Union State Community College in Opelika, was one of the first to offer the program back in January during its test run.

"It's different, very different from what most students are used to," said Doss Buckalew, an instructor at Southern Union who has taught the Swift curriculum. "It's not just a textbook with examples. It's a textbook with examples, but the examples are interactive. Using the Playground, they'll get to see how the app works as they're creating it. And it's not a huge leap from using that to creating actual apps that businesses can then use in the real world."

Buckalew has been teaching at Southern Union for 13 years and has



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“WE KNOW HOW ATTACHED OUR STUDENTS ARE TO THEIR PHONES. THEY SEE AND USE THOSE APPS EVERYDAY AND ARE NATURALLY INTERESTED IN HOW THEY WORK.”

- AURILIA SMITH

The clocktower is an icon of the CVCC Campus.



gotten more phone calls about the Swift program than anything in recent memory. Those inquiries haven't necessarily translated into increased enrollment ... at least not yet.

“We've had a lot of interest but the enrollment hasn't been especially high,” he said. “I think a lot of that had to do with timing. It's a three course sequence and we're a two-year college, so a lot of our students didn't want to start something they couldn't finish. But I think fall semester will tell us a lot.”

Enrollment has only just begun at CVCC, so interest in the new certificate program is slow. But Smith believes it will only be a matter of time before word starts to spread.

“We know how attached our students are to their phones,” she said. “They see and use those apps every day and are naturally interested in how they work. Right now, it's all about curiosity. Pretty soon, they'll hear about this program and realize the amazing opportunity it offers.”

“This is where a lot of students will find their future.” ↻

## TAYLOR FUNERAL HOME

1514 5th Ave. • Phenix City  
334.298.0364 • [TheTaylorFuneralHome.com](http://TheTaylorFuneralHome.com)

While it may seem counterintuitive, funerals are really for the living. Although great care is taken to honor the deceased and the triumphs of their life, it is their surviving relatives who use the funeral as a way to make peace, reminisce and say goodbye. Because of this, choosing a funeral home that will work with you and your family to produce a fitting tribute and guide you through troubling times, is crucial. At Taylor Funeral Home, they provide a “living service for the living” that focuses on creating a bond with your family and working with you to achieve some kind of peace. “There are over 100 different things that have to be done when a person dies,” funeral director Tony Taylor explains. “We try to lessen the burden on the family as much as possible.”

A pillar in the community, Taylor Funeral Home has served Phenix City for 27 years and continues to be involved. Along with being members of the Phenix City Chamber of Commerce and the Alabama, Georgia and National Funeral Associations, the funeral home leadership actively donates to and participates in a number of local church events and fundraisers. They also participate in United to Save Ourselves job program to benefit local youths by providing them with summer jobs. Taylor says the focus of the funeral home is to “build relationships ... whether someone uses us or not.” A family-focused environment is the key to



making families as comfortable as possible.

In keeping with the idea of family, Taylor Funeral Home offers comprehensive grief counseling to work with you through every aspect of the grieving process. From the moment you step through the doors, whether it's your first meeting or you're a long time friend, Tony Taylor and the Taylor Funeral Home family will welcome you with open arms. They offer a familiar, friendly face during a trying time and go above and beyond to support you and your family. From phone calls to in-home visits, you'll never be forgotten with Taylor Funeral Home.

After years of tireless service and unrivaled customer service, Taylor Funeral Home has positioned itself as the premiere option in Phenix City for a family-focused, service-centered environment.



## • PHENIX CITY IS • Positively Moving Ahead

“Inclusion.” That is the word that Phenix City Mayor Eddie Lowe sees as one of the major accomplishments in the city. “We’ve engaged every district,” he explains, “and engagement is critical. We have done that as a community.”

Mayor Lowe points to the exciting developments in every area of the city.

In the riverfront area, the Housing Authority has begun demolition of the old Riverview Apartments. In its place, Whitewater Village will rise. In phase one, residents will be moved to Hidden Hills Trace, a complex at the intersection of 24th Street and 19th Avenue. The aging housing that will be replaced with new properties with modern amenities is just one more element in the downtown revitalization.

The Troy University campus and Courtyard by Marriott are bringing new life to the area and Lowe points out the recently completed parking deck as critical to further development. “Go to any city and the number one problem is parking,” he points out. “I am glad we had the foresight to build that. It’s a responsibility of leadership to look forward.” He predicts that in 10 years the riverfront will not look the same as more people migrate there.

Another area of engagement is the development along 431 South. Plans for the 22-acre Villages at Crosswinds center around Renfroe’s Market, a Montgomery-based grocery store. The shopping center will feature 25,000 square feet of strip retail space and seven acres of highway frontage pad lots.

There is also activity along Hwy 280. A new shopping center with a variety of stores, including a Moe’s Southwestern Grill, Aspen Dental and a T-Mobile phone store is planned just in front of Walmart.

Some other big plans are on the drawing board. Lowe points out that this city of 38,000 people has no place to seat 500. He envisions a convention center on Brickyard Road that will accommodate a few thousand. “It’s something we desperately need,” he explains.

Another vision is to construct a park on the old Cobb Hospital property as a tribute to veterans. A committee of veterans is on board and in the process of seeking grants for the project.

The Mayor estimates there are \$50 million to \$62 million of investment opportunities in Phenix City now and in the future. Manufacturing and businesses already in place are reinvesting in the community as well as the new development. “We are thinking big and playing big,” he says and promises to keep playing big and getting investors.

One of the indicators that will help is that the city’s credit rating has just come back at a strong double A minus from Standard and Poor’s Financial Service. The city started the year with more than \$14 million in financial reserves and is operating in the black.

It’s not just economic development throughout Phenix City that Lowe sees as accomplishments. The Phenix City Mayor’s Ball, which is not a city function, raises money for scholarships and dual high school/college enrollment for the city’s kids.

There has also been a “no bare soles” compassion day in Phenix City. Brand new shoes and clothing were handed out to those in need. Long term, the mayor’s goal is to have a room where needs for such items can be met.

“Everything we’ve done and the opportunities in every district validate and solidify our goal of inclusion,” Lowe says.



# WOMEN @WORK



Today there is no field where women are not making their mark.  
In the following pages, we are proud to profile some that are  
making a difference in the Chattahoochee Valley.



## Evelyn Smith

**SYNOVUS LEAD RELATIONSHIP BANKER**  
706.644.0023 • EvelynSmith2@synovus.com

Evelyn Smith is known as the “bank lady,” and that adopted title is one she embraces. Smith’s official title is Lead Relationship Banker-Manager at the Synovus branch located at the Riverfront TSYS Campus in Downtown Columbus.

“When they come to me for help with a banking issue or question, I want them to leave my desk feeling light and free,” said Smith. “I tell them to take a deep breath and know that I will take care of it. I don’t want them to have to worry about anything, and that’s the best part of my job.”

Smith’s job entails ensuring TSYS employees’ financial needs are met. The TSYS Campus Synovus branch offers full-service banking. Employees may stop by and visit a teller, use the ATM, apply for a loan and simply take care of all their banking needs. The TSYS Campus houses thousands of employees, and the bank is one of many amenities placed in the facility since its opening in 1999.

“At one time, there was even a dry-cleaning service, a beauty salon and a convenience store here. I’ve been at this site from the beginning and have seen a lot of changes as things have evolved over the years, but the bank remains one of the best perks you hear employees talk about in addition to the cafeteria.”

Smith began working for Synovus in 1990 in the loan collections department. A 1985 graduate of Shaw High School, she enjoys being a part of the Synovus team and says she couldn’t imagine working anywhere else.

“I’ve been with the company literally a little more than half my life,” she said. “It will be 28 years in October. My loyalty stands strong.”

Outside of work, Smith also enjoys spending time with family. She and her life partner, Michael, enjoy attending and promoting local events such as the Uptown concert series. She has two adult stepchildren and four grandchildren whom she adores. Her four-legged children, Miller and Molly, are rescue dogs, and they are her pride and joy.



## Sallie Hadden

**SYNOVUS PRIVATE WEALTH ADVISOR**  
706.649.5837 • SallieHadden@synovus.com

Sallie Hadden doesn’t take her role as a Vice President and Private Wealth Advisor at Synovus lightly. She’s been in banking for 38 years. As a Private Wealth Advisor, she helps clients who need assistance in managing a portfolio of liquid assets as well as coordinating their other financial needs. Her client base focuses on physicians and their practices but also includes professionals and business owners from many arenas.

Whether it’s ensuring a client has money saved for their children’s college education or investing in a good life insurance policy, Hadden is always ready and willing to help.

“Our team handles clients’ credit and banking needs, investment management, insurance risk management and estate planning,” said Hadden. “We are comprised of specialists including registered securities representatives, certified financial planners, certified trust advisors and licensed insurance agents. When we work with clients, our goal is to develop a financial plan driven by the needs, goals and concerns of each client and then work to implement the various components and strategies within the plan to make it happen.”

Hadden compares her job to that of being the quarterback of the football team. She understands the significance of her role, but further understands the importance of everyone on the team.

“Something that is unique within our structure here at Synovus is that we are all housed within one company unlike some other financial institutions,” she said. “Because of that setup, I have the advantage of being able to look at all pieces on the table to make sure they are in sync and aren’t in cross purposes.”

Hadden says what she enjoys most about her job is meeting people along the way and building relationships with clients who become friends.

“We’re not just building client profit centers, we’re building relationships, and I really enjoy that. It’s a privilege for me when clients bring me and my team into their lives.”

Hadden is an Auburn University graduate and an active member of First Presbyterian Church and Columbus Rotary Club. She and her husband Wayne have one adult son. They enjoy traveling and life on the lake.

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## *Donna Morgan* **A PASSION FOR CARING**

“A lot of women taking care of each other,” is how Donna Morgan describes the staff at Columbus Hospice of Georgia and Alabama. One hundred thirty of the 135 paid employees are women. The newly promoted CEO is passionate about the team and the care they provide to patients and families facing difficult times.

She oversees palliative end-of-life services in 15 counties—10 in Georgia and 5 in Alabama. The physicians, nurses, social workers, chaplains, volunteers and nursing assistants provide services 24/7 wherever the patients are and no matter their ages or diagnoses.

Morgan has been with Columbus Hospice for 23 years starting as a part-time employee and serving now as CEO. One of the things she is proudest of is the local independent control that allows them to make on-the-spot decisions to improve patient care. In addition, they have the resources to give great quality care.

Columbus Hospice was originally founded by a board and volunteers in 1979 and for years rented facilities, but in 2000, they built the first inpatient hospice facility in this area. The initial 18-bed center has expanded to 25 beds with a beautifully landscaped courtyard and peaceful living room where patients and families can sit and talk. The Hospice House campus is pet friendly, welcomes children and allows visitors 24 hours a day.

Morgan points out that the Columbus area has always been generous with donations that help provide services to everyone regardless of ability to pay. Patients without insurance or with insufficient insurance are still served.

Although some might view end of life care as depressing, Morgan says there is nowhere else she would rather be or anything else she would rather do.

“What changed my life the most was nursing,” said Morgan. Her career path began in computers in the ‘80s but she returned to school to get her bachelors in nursing. She worked in the bone marrow transplant division of the oncology department at Emory University Hospital in Atlanta. It was there that she found she could talk with people about end of life choices.

Transition to hospice from there was easy. After she came to Columbus with her military husband, the new mom saw an ad in the paper for Columbus Hospice and wanted something part time. She worked weekends in healthcare but soon moved into full time education and clinical management and when the former CEO decided to retire, the board gave her opportunity to take the helm.

“I have a desk, but don’t consider my job riding that desk,” she said of her new position. “I get out and get involved in the facility and in homes. Every day is different, whether working with family or working with staff on an issue.”

It’s the daily variety and opportunity to grow that energizes her. As president of the Hospice & Palliative Nurses Association, Morgan says she had the opportunity to see how hospice is done throughout the country and the world, which helped her bring ideas back to Columbus.

“Nursing opened so many doors and gave me opportunities I never dreamed of,” she said. “It gave me a chance to do everything from education to marketing to quality control.”

Morgan has some definite plans. She wants to help take Columbus Hospice into the forever future and personally wants to continue growing, learning and adapting to challenges.

**COLUMBUS HOSPICE** 7020 Moon Road, Columbus • 706.569.7992 • [ColumbusHospice.com](http://ColumbusHospice.com)

## **ABOUT DONNA**

**1988** • Cum laude graduate nursing Lenoir-Rhyne University

**1995-2018** • Sr. VP Clinical Operations Columbus Hospice responsible for all patient care and patient care support services.

**2018** • CEO Columbus Hospice

# Robbie Branscomb

## GROWING COLUMBUS' YOUTH

"There is nothing formal in my background that points to all of this," said Robbie Branscomb of her position as chief executive officer of Let's Grow STEAM<sup>x</sup>. She was working as events coordinator at the Columbus Civic Center when the lightning bolt hit. While creating an educational component for the community fair, Branscomb visualized the STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math) educational challenge.

"It was what I saw for the next generation (through the concept of STEAM) which intrigued me. I wanted to make sure every child in our community had access to the offerings of STEAM so they could be inspired to develop a love of lifelong learning through it."

Although she never expected to get this involved in what started as a work project, Branscomb said, "Let's Grow STEAM<sup>x</sup> is very rewarding and the thirst of the children for continued learning drives me and my partners to do more." She said letters of thanks and suggestions from the children and parents make it all worthwhile.

"I go to bed fulfilled, satisfied," she said with a huge smile. Branscomb partnered with two long-time friends, Leshan Ferguson, an educator and Tashee Singleton, an accountant. The three formalized Let's Grow STEAM<sup>x</sup> as a non-profit and set out to create an educational platform that connects youth ages 5-18 with informal STEAM-based learning through fun activities and community events.

(L to R) Tashee Singleton,  
Robbie Branscomb,  
Leshan Ferguson



The soapbox derby and the racer clinics was one of their first events. Three hundred kids grade Pre-K through 12 attended over a 12-week period. "The process of learning and the practicing of STEAM disciplines by building and racing soap box cars help to instill in our participants a passion for inquiry and discovery and fosters skills such as persistence, teamwork and the application of gained knowledge to new situations. Our participants also learn lessons in construction and apply math concepts learned in the classroom," said Branscomb.

Another event, the Youth College and Careers Expo, is in its third year now. This year it will be held November 29 at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center. The expo is designed to integrate youth, businesses and our community through a holistic educational approach. Branscomb believes when people understand what it takes to succeed at a given job, they are more likely to choose one that is right for them. During the expo, youth in grades 4 thru 12 have the opportunity to explore different careers. Breakout sessions give them the opportunity to talk with professionals, learn about hard and soft skills, and how to operate in a professional environment. The expo allows area businesses to engage over 3,000 students, making a huge impact on their perceptions about various industries as well as exposing attendees to their companies' offerings. Last year over 70 businesses and organizations attended the Expo. Branscomb and her team hope there will be even greater participation this year from more Columbus employers.

The community benefits from this type of interaction because it creates a sense of connection between the current and future workforce and our community leaders. The hope is that this event continues to grow, thrive and serve as a viable resource for school districts and businesses for many years to come.

The largest challenge for the group is continued funding and spreading information about the programs. The important work Let's Grow STEAM<sup>x</sup> does for the youth of our community must continue to be built upon with the support of community organizations, businesses and corporations.

For more information on how your business may specifically be involved contact Branscomb at [robbie@letsgrowsteam.org](mailto:robbie@letsgrowsteam.org).

**LET'S GROW STEAM<sup>x</sup>**

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## Dr. Nicole Flandry PUTTING YOUR BEST FACE FORWARD

The staff at Riverside Dermatology and Aesthetic Center is eager to help patients with all their skin care needs. Dr. Nicole Flandry started the practice in 2014 and has been amazed by the growth she's seen in just a few short years. The business moved to a larger facility about a year ago.

"Columbus has been a great support and has really helped us grow from a very small practice to this larger office, so there's a need, and hopefully we are helping to meet some of that need," said Flandry.

The facility has an 18-member, all women staff. That's a set-up that wasn't necessarily in the plans. "I think it just ended up this way," she said.

Riverside is a full-service dermatology clinic specializing in medical, general and pediatric dermatology. Patients can also receive injectable treatments like Botox and fillers, and there are two aestheticians on staff that perform laser treatments, facials, micro needling and more.

"I really love my patients and the fact that every day is different," she

said. "I know that we are making a difference. Quality skin care keeps you healthy and gives you a fresher look which just makes you feel better on the inside."

Flandry is originally from Columbus and always knew she wanted to become a doctor someday.

"My dad is a doctor," she said. "From the time I was 3 years old, he would take me on rounds at the hospital. Now, I see my own patients. I may see the daughter, then the granddaughter, so you get to know families, and you get to develop relationships with people. I knew I wanted to come back to my hometown and offer quality care for people here."

The staff at Riverside does its part to give back to the community by providing free skin screenings, and visiting Mercy Med once a month to help patients who are uninsured or don't have access to care.

"I like the fact that we have an opportunity to go out in the community and educate," said Flandry. "I'm just very blessed to have great patients, a great staff and a job that I think is fun and keeps me challenged."

Flandry, a member of Holy Family Catholic Church, enjoys traveling and spending time with her son.

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# Steeplechase

*at Callaway* Presented by *Southern Living*

BY TAYLER NEWMAN

There are a few events that are deeply connected to the cities they are hosted in. The Boston Marathon, Pamplona's Running of the Bulls and Lexington's Kentucky Derby are famous examples, but closer to home, the Steeplechase at Callaway, this year presented by *Southern Living*, has been Columbus' big event since its inception in 1985. Always on the first Saturday in November, this tradition has been a longtime staple in the Columbus community, but that doesn't mean the organizers have gotten complacent.

Since the Lampton family hired Outdoor Events to manage the event in 2016, the group has worked to make the Steeplechase a fun and more affordable community experience. The first order of business under Outdoor Events was to allow children 15 and under in for free, making it an event that entire families can attend without breaking the bank. Just as important, the Outdoor Events staff works to create a lighter and more enjoyable workload for the hundreds of volunteers who help to make the Steeplechase a reality. The added benefit of the enhanced volunteer experience is that the race director, Michelle Blanchard, now has the ability to focus solely on the artistic and community involvement aspects of the event, which promotes race attendance and furthers the goal of growing the Steeplechase.

The newest and most exciting news of the 2018 event is the announcement by the Lampton family and Southern Living magazine of their new partnership that introduces

The Steeplechase at Callaway Gardens Presented by *Southern Living*. With *Southern Living's* ringing endorsement, the Steeplechase is now positioned, not only as a premiere event locally, but also as a widely known regional event that will draw patrons from all over the Southeast to Columbus and the region.

Upgrades to the railing throughout the grounds add a stunning visual pop to the old, familiar fixtures, and the addition of the new Liberty Utilities Hunt Club aims to give young professionals a casual and affordable V.I.P. experience. For just \$150 per person, guests receive an all-inclusive experience complete with food, a wine and beer bar and live entertainment for only \$40 more than a standard terrace ticket. The catering will be handled by an all-star cast of local eateries including Country's, Epic, It's Your Day and Callaway Gardens, which further solidifies how uniquely "Columbus" this event is.

In addition to a delicious lineup of caterers and a full day of races, the TSYS Infield offers a wide selection of activities from inflatables and rock climbing to pony

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# Recently Married?



If you were married after November 2017, we'd like to include your wedding photo in our Wedding Gallery in our January/February issue. Please send a photo of the bride and groom and include first and last names of both, wedding date and location, the photographer's name and a phone number where you can be reached. All information must be included for photo to be published. As many photos will be published as space allows.

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\$30,000 – 39,999	\$47	\$42	\$39
\$20,000 – 29,999	\$37	\$32	\$29
\$12,000 – 19,999	\$33	\$27	\$24
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**-Theresa Robertson**

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rides and face painting that will entertain the whole family. Other exciting traditions at Steeplechase include the silent auction and the Jack Russell Terrier races.

The Steeplechase at Callaway is committed to creating an inclusive and entertaining experience for the entire community, but just as important is its mission—set by Mary Lu and Mason Lampton back in 1985—to give back to the arts in Columbus. The proceeds from the event are put directly back into Columbus’ art community in the form of donations to local institutions like the Springer Opera House, the Columbus Symphony Orchestra, Historic Columbus as well as the Ida Cason Callaway Foundation. This commitment to the arts has resulted in over \$4 million donated to local arts organizations.

Other than donating proceeds, Steeplechase supports local artists by hosting an art contest for local K - 12 students. The contest is divided by grade level, and the winning pieces will be displayed in a gallery at the Columbus Museum from October 1 to October 26, with an awards ceremony to celebrate the winners on October 24 at 5 p.m. This contest not only highlights the remarkable work of Columbus’ young artists, but it also gives them confidence and pride upon seeing their work hung in the Columbus Museum.

Going forward, Theresa Garcia Robertson, the event’s executive director, says, “Our goal is to ensure that this event can last for 34 more years.” One of the ways Outdoor Events is working to make that happen is by “making Steeplechase an easy event to attend,” she said. This process began with allowing children under 15 into Steeplechase for free but has extended to increasing the availability of quality food options as well as selling wine and beer on premises to make going to Steeplechase as simple as just getting in the car. The next phase, she says, is to broaden the “regional look” of Steeplechase in order to make it not just a major Columbus event but a major event for anyone in the Southeast. Simply put, Robertson states, “Our goal is always to grow the event.”

This year’s Steeplechase is November 3, and gates will open at 10 a.m. The race day schedule, frequently asked questions and a full list of ticket options can be found on the Steeplechase website at [SteeplechaseAtCallaway.org](http://SteeplechaseAtCallaway.org). ©

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# CRUSH



BY PAT DANIEL

## POST-APOCALYPTIC WINES

It was last October, we all heard about it, read about and worried about the horrible fires that resulted from the hottest summer on record in the West Coast and the abundant tinder-dry vegetation that became the fuel for the wildfires. We heard about the thousands of acres burning, the vineyards in the fire's path, the beautiful wineries in danger and the evacuations. Then we moved on to the next news story. The fire was contained and the media moved on. Whatever happened there? Did the great California vineyards burn? What about the grapes that had already been harvested? Was the wine already in the wineries destroyed?

Signorello Estate was one of the first to catch our attention. We watched in horror as the flames licked the Italianate stonework. It seemed inevitable that all of Signorello would be destroyed. The fires were massive and moving rapidly. When it was over, across Northern California 44 people were killed, 240,000 acres destroyed and almost 9,000 buildings burned down. But amazingly, as extensive as the damage was, most of the damage was in the mountains between Napa and Sonoma. When the fires were contained and people were allowed to return, Signorello was mostly unscathed. Only one structure had burned, and the flames had stopped just shy of the fermenting tanks. That wine was spared and is now resting in its barrels.

Incredibly, 99.8 percent of the vineyards were untouched by the fires. Only .5 percent of the winegrape crop was destroyed, and only

seven percent of wineries sustained structural damage or long-term impact. Here is the miracle: the vineyards were in the path of the fires, but instead of burning, acted as firebreaks. While the edges of some of the vineyards were scorched, the lack of underbrush in the vineyards and the lush green canopy of the vines, kept the fires from moving through them, protected the wineries and saved lives. It turns out vines retain water and just don't provide good fuel for fires.

In addition, while smoke taint can ruin grapes still on the vines, at the time of the fires—most of the grapes—85 to 90 percent, had already been harvested, and the juice was already in the fermenting tanks. White grapes are most vulnerable to smoke taint, but the grapes that remained to be harvested were predominantly Cabernet Sauvignon, which have thicker skins and are less likely to be damaged by smoke taint.

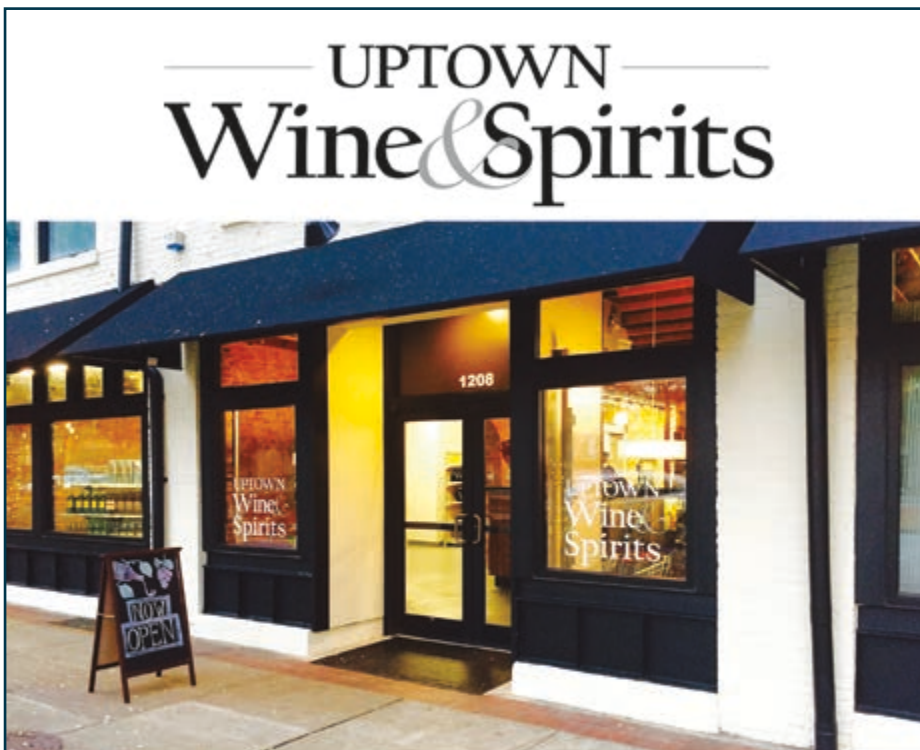
Was the California wine region almost totally unscathed? Not quite. A few vineyards were badly damaged. Notably, Paradise Ridge in Santa Rosa, which lost its winery, event center and much of their wine that was already in bottles. In addition, a large amount of housing inventory was lost in an area already incredibly stressed by the shortage of dwellings. But, the biggest loss was in the revenue from tourism, which was completely stopped in October and only partially rebounded in November. October and November are typically high season in the tourism industry in California, and the fires temporarily stopped all of that. Both employers and employees felt the dramatic loss of income in that

time period.

The silver lining was the way that the people in these communities worked together to support each other. Area hotels and restaurants, already strained by the loss in tourism dollars, pitched in to help the temporarily homeless locals and the legions of firefighters by offering free rooms and meals. Also, several renowned chefs cooked for the firefighters, volunteers and shelters. The feeling of community in and around Sonoma grew as a result. The message from Sonoma vintners is, "Everything you love about this place, every reason that people come here, is still here. Come and spend money."

The great concern now is that the vintners are worried that consumers will think that the smoke has ruined the 2017 wines, or that the wines will not be plentiful. In fact, the wines should be just fine, and the harvest was a particularly large one, so there will not be any shortage. There was also a concern among consumers that the prices will go up dramatically for this vintage, which also does not appear to be the case. The industry has a communications plan to educate the consumers about these facts as the vintage is released.

As devastating as these fires were, they are a natural part of the ecology of California. There were a series of large fires in the mid-1960s, and Atlas Peak also burned in 1981. One would hope that after the fires of 2017, there would be another period of calm between these incidents, however, as I write this at the beginning of August, there are more large fires in unburned areas of California, and this is only the beginning of the fire season. 🌀



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Neil Clark, Mary Lou and Charlie Jarrell, Margie Richardson and Debi Clark enjoy a previous Mingle on Mercury Drive. Each year the Mingle is relocated to showcase a different neighborhood in Midtown



MidTown Inc. will hold its eighth annual MidTown Mingle, the sole fundraising event for the year. Each year the event moves to a new location to highlight Midtown's diverse neighborhoods and businesses. This year's Mingle will take place on Thursday, October 11, from 6:30 to 10 p.m. at the bottom of Thrill Hill—at 16th Avenue and Dinglewood Park.


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Thrill Hill is a great location for the Mingle because it's strongly woven into the local lore and holds a special place in the hearts of people across generations. If you ask just about anyone who spent their youth in the Midtown area of Columbus whether they've ever "gotten air" going down Thrill Hill, most likely their answer will be yes.

Sara Varner, one of this year's co-chairs said, "Growing up, my mother dealt with our daily requests to 'ramp' the Hill. On special occasions, my father would race us [safely, of course] down the Hill in his '75 Oldsmobile convertible. In my experience, a steel frame and old school suspension really add to the 'thrill.' And in keeping with tradition, my own kids now beg me to share with them this small but special part of Columbus, (and we might get a little air)."

One thing the folks at MidTown want readers to know is that Midtown's six square miles represent less than three percent of the city's land area, yet Midtown is home to over 12 percent of Columbus' population and holds over 10 percent of its tax base. MidTown leadership believes that a vibrant Midtown is essential to a thriving Columbus community.

Funds generated from this event are the largest single source of operating revenue for MidTown Inc. and the organization could not pursue its mission of making Midtown even better without this vital community support. Currently MidTown is looking forward to the completion of the Wynnton Streetscape project and is anticipating a ribbon cutting in early 2019.

Each year a local artist is chosen to paint a scene of the upcoming Mingle. This year the original framed Mingle artwork by Midtown artist Julianne David will be on display and guests may submit a closed bid to take "Thrill Hill" home with them.

Tickets for the event include a special dinner menu from Country's Barbecue, beer and wine, and music from The Chattahoochee Pine Beatles. Tickets are \$50 per person until September 27 and \$65 per person September 28 through October 4. Children between ages 6 and 12 are \$15; Children 5 and under are free. To make your reservations by October 4 visit [MidtownColumbusGa.org](http://MidtownColumbusGa.org) or call 706.494.1663. 📍

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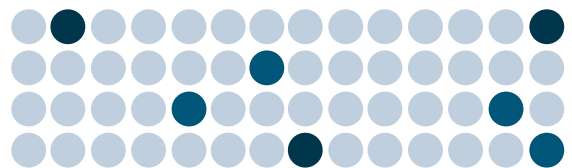
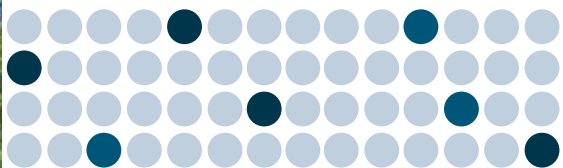
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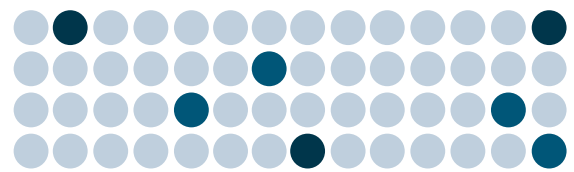
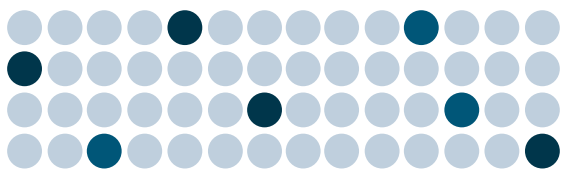
# YOUNG PROFESSIONALS Decennial Celebration

In 2008, Aflac leadership approached the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce seeking to create an organization for, not only Aflac's young employees, but also for the community's. Their mission was to assist in engaging and retaining the young talent in the Columbus area. Aflac's young professionals wanted an organization that would help them network and connect with other Columbus professionals also starting their careers. This need sparked an idea to create an organization for the young and talented professionals in the area and resulted in the Columbus Georgia Young Professionals (YP).

In 2008, there were 85 active members; today there are 550 members representing over 110 local businesses. On July 20, the organization proudly celebrated its 10th anniversary with a champagne toast to the successes of the last 10 years, and to the possibilities for the next 10. For one night only, Columbus State University flipped their RiverPark Student Activity Center and opened Club|Ten. Over 250 attendees danced the night away to the incredible voices of the Chemistry Project Band and DJ03.

It was a night of celebration, along with an opportunity to reflect on the past decade and thank the remarkable leadership that helped form the organization that YP is today. Cheers to 10 years of YP in Columbus, Georgia!





# Chamber Welcomes **MERCER MEDICAL STUDENTS**

On February 10, 2012, Mercer University announced its plans to partner with Piedmont Columbus Regional and St. Francis Hospital to establish a Columbus, Georgia campus for its School of Medicine. Mercer University School of Medicine (MUSM) currently enrolls M.D. students at its campuses in Columbus, Macon and Savannah.

For the seventh year upon the arrival of MUSM's students to Columbus, the Greater Columbus GA Chamber of Commerce hosted a reception to formally welcome the new class to Columbus. This year's class of 19 students arrived to the Chamber with a warm welcome from Mayor Teresa Tomlinson, local hospital staff, Chamber staff and their friends and family. Mayor Tomlinson presented the class with a proclamation declaring Thursday, August 2, 2018 as 2018 Mercer University School of Medicine Arnold P. Gold Foundation Student Clinician Day.

The Chamber looks forward to hosting this event in the future and being a part of the involvement that Mercer and its students will have in our community. With the understanding that the State of Georgia is facing a critical shortage of physicians within the next decade and beyond, we support the partnership between MUSM and our local hospitals which will improve the quality of health for our region. The terms of the partnership state that the Mercer School of Medicine will eventually place up to 80 third- and fourth-year medical students at the Columbus Campus.



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# Death by Chocolate

A Tempting Fate

BY TAYLER NEWMAN



**F**or the third consecutive year, Port Columbus is giving Columbus a death sentence. The method of execution? Chocolate. Port Columbus' popular "Death by Chocolate" fundraiser is back and sweeter than ever. The perfect combination of sugar and history, this night of confections, cocktails and live music hosted at the National Civil War Naval Museum is a chance to support a local institution, uncover intriguing history and maybe even win a trip to The Masters Tournament in Augusta.

"There's a lot of chocolate here," the museum's Executive Director Holly Wait explains excitedly, adding the caveat, "We don't require that the vendors bring all chocolate. We ask them to bring three different selections, and one of them must be chocolate." Drooling already? If not, the list of vendors will make your mouth water. Kilwins, Stephanie's Heavenly Treats and Morten's at Old Town will offer just a few of the delectable selections. In addition to tasty desserts, B&B Beverage will be bringing a complimentary mix of beer, wine and spirits.

After the success of last year's Friday the 13th theme, Port Columbus is keeping things mysterious with a Masquerade theme. As part of the Masquerade, there will be live bands, a fortune teller offering tarot readings and a photo station in addition to the desserts and libations, but the really fun part will be the silent auction.

Wait and the Port Columbus crew are especially excited about the offerings in this year's silent auction which will feature



From chocolates to cheesecakes, guests will get to satisfy their sweet teeth.

more than 80 auction selections. Along with the usual haul of gift packages from local business like Black Lotus and YourPie, there is a slew of enticing trips up for grabs. For history buffs, the opportunity to visit famous sites and historic cities like

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Creative libations are always a popular offering at Death by Chocolate.

Gettysburg, Boston, New Orleans and Charleston as well as the Atlanta History Center and other splendid museums.

However, if sports history is more your speed, the chance to attend two mammoth sporting events is on the table. First, a trip to the NCAA Final Four in Minneapolis, Minnesota is on the line, allowing die-hard hoops fans to attend the biggest college

basketball event of the year. Another sports-themed auction item gives golf fanatics the opportunity to attend the most legendary tournament in America, The Masters Tournament at Augusta National.

There's something for everyone, young and old, to enjoy, but the most important part is connecting the community with its history. "History is the only thing you know for sure. You don't know what tomorrow is, but I can tell you about yesterday," Wait says, explaining the need to understand history. "We rely on the kindness of strangers," she adds, and events like Death by Chocolate are an innovative and delicious way that Port Columbus strives to spread kindness to the strangers that support them.

Death by Chocolate will be held at the National Civil War Naval Museum on Friday, October 19 from 7 to 10 p.m. Tickets are \$35 for museum members and \$60 for non-members. Whether you've ever been to the Naval Museum before or not, this event is a fun way to enjoy the best sweet treats Columbus has to offer while fostering a deeper appreciation for this historical gem. 🍫

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# WANTED: OPEN HEARTS and HOMES



The McGinnis family

The Brad and Katie Griffith have two biological children, Gracie and Noah and Omarion who was adopted out of foster care.



BY CALISTA SPRAGUE

*"We had space in our home and love to give, and there were children who needed love and a home, even if it was temporary,"* remembered Jawan McGinnis. In 2012 she and her husband Mitch decided to take the steps to become foster parents. Since then, they have fostered nine children, adopting one, in addition to rearing their three biological children.

The McGinnis' story is a common one, but not common enough in Muscogee County. Foster parents give a meaningful gift of love and stability to the children they take in, but many more local families are needed. Currently, according to the Department of Family and Children Services (DFCS), there are currently 488 children in foster care but only 123 beds at foster homes in Muscogee County.

When children come into care and no beds are available locally, the caseworkers have to look outside the county to place children, and sometimes to areas of the state as far away as Dalton or Savannah.

"To be placed in care is obviously traumatic enough without going some distance away for the placement," points out Judge Warner Kennon, who presides over the Juvenile Courts of the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit. Children in care not only have to adjust to life in a stranger's home, typically for six to 12 months, but if placement cannot be found nearby, they must also adjust to a new community and a new school, compounding their stress and sense of instability.

## Making a Difference

While the need for additional foster families in the area remains an urgent one, the situation reached a crisis point just a few years ago. In 2013, there were more than 520 children in care and only 67 local beds. Judge Kennon and Superior Court Judge Gil McBride, along with Judge Andrew Dodgen and Judge Joey Loudermilk and their wives, have been instrumental in reducing the number of children in care while nearly doubling the number of local foster families.

"A lot of the issues around foster care involve drugs," explained Kennon. Drugs are an increasing problem for families, not only in the Chattahoochee Valley, but throughout the state of Georgia. The number of children in state care has nearly doubled during the past five years, a spike attributed to the opioid drug crisis. "We decided that if we could help the parents from that end, perhaps we could keep the children from going into care at all through a new family drug court," Kennon said.

Muscogee County Family Drug Court offers a voluntary program for parents

struggling with addiction whose children, under the age of 12, have been placed or are in danger of being placed into DFCS care. When possible, the children remain in their own homes through a protective order. The parents work a plan set by the court, receiving treatment and support from local agencies and checking in weekly

***"Foster care is about reuniting families."***

— Jawan McGinnis

with the court for accountability. The ultimate goal is to help parents succeed so their children never enter the foster care system.

Along with the efforts to reduce the number of children in care, additional efforts have helped increase the number of local foster families. Area churches have been key. "There are roughly 450 churches in Columbus, so one child, one church," Kennon commented. The math certainly works. If one family from each church signed on to foster children, the shortage would be erased, and Muscogee County could even help some children from other counties.

Several area churches have signed on to support the efforts, and in 2012 Brad Griffith launched a local organization called Clement Arts to help. "At first we were doing mainly adoption support," Griffith explained, "but because of our connection with foster care, and just seeing the need in general, we wanted to find more ways for the organization to do foster care work." Griffith and his wife, also parents of two biological children, had become foster parents earlier that same year in Alabama.

"We had an opportunity to partner with Promise 686 out of Atlanta," Griffith said. "And then we put together a model in Columbus and the surrounding area for churches to have foster care ministries. They recruit foster families but also create a system of volunteers who provide support to those families so they can foster longer."

Through its Clement Care program, Clement Arts trains foster care advocates to raise awareness in their congregations,

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## Interested in Foster Care?

The first ever Clement Care ONE Conference takes place September 29 from 1:30 p.m. to 5 p.m. and is a free event for the whole family in support of Foster Care in Muscogee county.

Adult attendees will enjoy two workshops that will give practical help and education based on their role in foster ministry: foster families, volunteers, advocates and pastors. These workshops will be led by those on the front lines of foster care in the community and who have a passion for helping others find the support they need for the various roles.

After the workshops there will be a general session which includes music from Randall Goodgame and an inspirational message from Promise 686 President Andy

Cook. Promise 686 is a ministry that assists families and churches who care for vulnerable children by providing financial assistance, community support and adoptive and foster care related education.

Children ages 4-12 will be treated to a very special "Sing the Bible" Slugs and Bugs concert by Goodgame. After the show, the ONE Kids Conference will get creative with Clement Kids sessions in art, drama, and music. Space is limited for the kids conference, so early registration is a must. Nursery registration for children ages 0-3 are needed by September 15.

The event will be held at St. Andrews Presbyterian Church, 4980 Hancock Rd, Midland. For more information or to register, visit [Clement-Art.org/Event/OncConference](http://Clement-Art.org/Event/OncConference).

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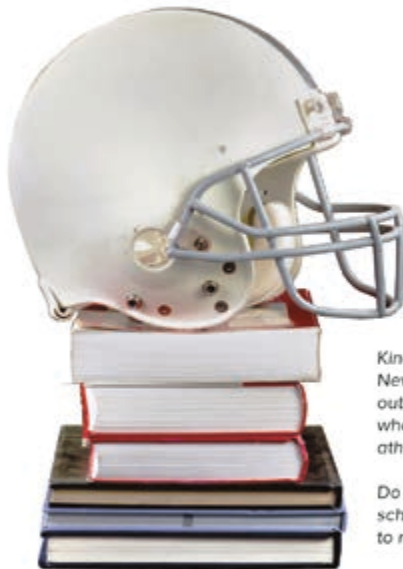


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to encourage families to attend foster care training, and to implement volunteer programs in support of foster families.

Griffith says that volunteer support is important. "There are a lot of people who want to get involved but for whatever reason aren't able to foster. Fostering can be a little overwhelming for families, so whether it's bringing a meal, helping with babysitting, helping with transportation, those things can go a

***"Having foster children in our life has benefitted us as a family, how we relate to other people."***

— Jawan McGinnis

long way toward keeping foster families in a good place."

Clement Arts offers community dance, visual art, drama and music classes, which foster children are invited to attend for free. "It gives them a creative outlet that they might not get otherwise," Griffith explained. Also, the money raised from students who pay for the classes is granted to families adopting children.

### **Fostering Benefits Both Families**

"It's not just for the foster children," Jawan McGinnis said. "They get to step into our lives, and we get to step into theirs. Our kids have enjoyed it. They've bonded with all the kids who have come through our house, especially the ones who stayed for a long time."

"It teaches them to sacrifice. It teaches them love," Mitch added. Jawan agreed, "Having foster children in our lives has benefitted us as a family, how we relate to other people."

Occasionally a child's parents are deemed unfit and the child is put into foster care until an adoptive family can be found. In fact, the McGinnis family and the Griffith family have each adopted a child they first fostered. But in the majority of cases, the goal of foster care is reunification of the biological family within the span of a year or less. Foster families act as a loving safety net, giving the biological parents time to address their issues and stabilize the home so their children can return.

"I think a lot of people get the impression that these are bad people, and that's just not the case," Griffith remarked. "A lot of times these are parents who love their children and want to provide for their children, but there may be mental health issues, there may be poverty, there may be issues beyond their control. It has made us more compassionate."

"The thing we hear most often from people is 'Once I brought a kid into my home, I don't think I could say goodbye,' but that is the calling in foster care," Mitch said. "We will love this kid. It may be for a month, a year or the rest of its life."

"Yes, we want to love them forever," Jawan added. "Yes, it breaks our hearts, but that's not what this is about. This is about reuniting families. We get the honor and the privilege of being able to hand them back to their families. That's a beautiful thing."

To learn more about fostering a child or supporting a family, visit [clement-arts.org](http://clement-arts.org).

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Margarita is an early-blooming tulip variety that produces stunning deep purple to violet double blossoms.

**C**elebrate the National Garden Bureau's Year of the Tulip in a big way by planting double flowered tulip varieties this fall for a showy display next spring. Flower arrangers love the big bold blossoms that resemble peonies and you'll love their impressive blooms in your garden and containers.

Start and end the tulip season with these beautiful spring-flowering bulbs. Plant double tulips in small informal clusters of seven or more bulbs scattered throughout your gardens or combine them with other types of tulips, spring flowering bulbs and perennials. And be sure to add extras to enjoy as cut flowers.

Plant the early-blooming variety Margarita with grape hyacinths for multiple layers of color and fragrance. These violet-purple double tulips are ideal for perennial gardens and

after they bloom, the perennials will help mask the declining bulb foliage. Add even more impact by pairing them with other early-flowering pink and red tulips.

Turn up the heat with the warm tones of honey-gold, apricot and peach found in Foxy Foxtrot. This tulip looks great when paired with purple, pink and even red flowers. Like other doubles, it makes a great cut flower. Enliven the spring garden with double tulip Monte Orange. Its brilliant tangerine blossoms have a sunny yellow center and the flowers get even showier as they mature. Combine this variety with yellow daffodils for greater impact and a longer display.

Fill in the mid-spring garden with some classic Darwin Hybrid tulips such as Blushing Apeldoorn, Apricot Impression and Ad Rem. Then create a grand finale of



Courtesy of Longfield Gardens

Combine Flair tulips with grape hyacinths this fall for a dramatic display of color next spring.

blooms by planting a few of the late spring double tulips. Include Crème Upstar with its sweetly fragrant pastel blooms that change from cream and pale yellow to apricot, pink and rose. It's an exceptional cut flower for your spring bouquets.

Add an array of jewel tones with a designer collection of double late tulips. The Parade of Pink Mix includes four varieties of fragrant double late tulips in white, pink, rose and magenta. Say a cheery goodbye to spring with the Yellow Pomponette/Sun Lover combination. These double late tulip varieties pair lemon yellow with blood orange and together they make a nice addition to any sunny spot in the landscape.

Check out Longfield Gardens' article ([longfield-gardens.com/article/tulips-by-bloom-time](http://longfield-gardens.com/article/tulips-by-bloom-time))

for a list of tulips by bloom time, then go shopping so you can enjoy six weeks or more of tulip blooms in your spring garden. For best results, purchase large firm bulbs from a reliable source and store them in a cool dark place until you are ready to plant.

Grow tulips in a sunny or partially shaded location with good drainage. Keep in mind those shady spots in the landscape may provide sufficient sunlight for your tulips in spring before the trees leaf out.

Wait for the soil to cool to begin planting. This is usually mid to late fall after a hard frost and before the ground freezes. Place the bulbs four to five inches apart on center and about six to seven inches deep in properly prepared soil with good drainage. Add a low nitrogen, slow release fertilizer and water thoroughly.

Then relax and enjoy your fall garden and all the beauty winter brings as you wait for the eruption of color in your garden and containers next spring. ☺

*Melinda Myers has written more than 20 gardening books and is a columnist and contributing editor for Birds & Blooms magazine.*

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# ISSUES ARE On the Table

BY DOUG GILLET

When the Community Foundation of the Chattahoochee Valley (CFCV) issued a blanket invitation last fall for the entire region to come together and talk about the issues they considered most important, CFCV Executive Director Betsy Covington says she didn't know what to expect.

"Several of us said, right up until the day of, 'I feel like we're throwing this giant party and I don't know if anyone's going to show up,'" she remembers of last year's On the Table event.

Their "party" turned out to be a blowout—around 6,500 people gathered in groups all over Columbus and the foundation's eight-county service area to get to know one another, enjoy some food and talk about everything from education and infrastructure to ways to make the community more unified.



Thus, while CFCV had originally seen On the Table as “kind of a one-off,” the success of the 2017 event led the Miami-based James L. Knight Foundation—which had asked Columbus to be part of the first cohort of 10 participating cities—to issue another invitation for 2018. The second installment of On the Table is scheduled for October 23, with registration opening as you read this.

### TAKING IT TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Is the Community Foundation hoping for even greater participation this year? “Well, I’m a pretty competitive person,” Covington says with a laugh. “I’m hoping that if there were people who were nervous about participating last year, they heard from their friends that it was a really neat experience. I’m hopeful, but I don’t have a specific target in mind—I just want people to know the invitation is open to everybody.”

*“I’m hoping that if there were people who were nervous about participating last year, they heard from their friends that it was a really neat experience.”*

-BETSY COVINGTON

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What was more significant than the sheer numbers of last year's event, she says, was the degree to which the conversations continued even after the official event was over. "One of the things that has been exciting to hear about is how many groups are still coming together and meeting regularly or semi-regularly," she explains. "There have been efforts coming out of this—MidTown, Inc., for instance, had a trash cleanup day because that was one of the things people heard at the table about Midtown. There are empowerment groups that have been meeting. So it wasn't just a one-off day."

Inspired by the people who have kept the conversations going, the Community Foundation will be making civic engagement a major theme of On the Table 2018. While participation in this year's event certainly doesn't obligate anyone to contribute to future meetings or activities, "for people who are ready to go to the next step, we'll equip them with ways to do that," says Kelli Parker, CFCV's director of grants and community partnerships. "And for those who were asking last year, 'What's next?' there will be



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something for them, too.”

“Some people will take action after what they hear that day,” Covington agrees, “but for some people, the discussion itself will be an act of civic engagement. And we want to make sure we’re always valuing that.”

### SURVEY SAYS...

Another encouraging aspect of last year’s On the Table was the results of the survey people took after participating. While CFCV didn’t get completed surveys back from all 6,500 people, they received enough to get some pretty positive returns.

According to Parker, 89 percent of respondents said they better understood how they could help address their communities’ needs, and nearly that many said they felt like they could make at least a moderate impact. “People felt like they better knew how to get things done, and they felt like if they did get plugged in, they could make a difference—that’s a win,” she says.

In addition, more than seven in 10 participants reported connecting with someone they didn’t know—and more than likely wouldn’t have gotten to know without On the Table. In a political environment that has grown increasingly polarized around the country, that alone makes the event worthwhile, Covington says.

Building on that thought, Covington throws out a couple more numbers—“31906 to 31903,” representing two of the Chattahoochee Valley’s most disparate ZIP codes in terms of demographics and economics. “A lot of the discussion I heard [last year] was that we are a community



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with a lot of economic stratification,” she says. “So what can we do to lower those barriers between neighborhoods? The more we understand about who the other people are, how they live and what their challenges are, the more we find out how much we have in common.”

While the lag time to process last year’s surveys was considerable, Covington mentions that a pair of firms that have conducted numerous nationwide political polls will administer this year’s surveys. “We’ll start getting results back very quickly,” she predicts.

## A BITE AND SOME BANTER

Even before the official start of registration, Covington has been pleased to see people and organizations lining up to host conversations, including one “superhost” that has already committed to 15 tables. As with last year, there are no requirements as far as location, group size, or topic—only that there’s some food involved. “It doesn’t have to be a three-course meal, it can be coffee and donuts, but food is an important part of it,” she says.

The foundation hopes that food and a more intimate atmosphere will differentiate these gatherings from city council meetings and the like. “I don’t want to denigrate public meetings, they have a place in our society,” she says. But On the Table isn’t “just for the ‘usual suspects’ who go to public meetings—they’re welcome, but it’s also for people who don’t get asked very often about what they think.

“If people want to have a discussion about their neighborhood or their schools, this is a really great way to do it,” Covington says. “We want to make it very easy for someone to host a table, or to attend a conversation. We just want everybody to feel like they are invited.”

To register for On the Table 2018, or to get more information, visit [OnTheTableChatt.com](http://OnTheTableChatt.com). ©





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# Celebration of Hope

## HELPING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE VICTIMS

BY TAYLER NEWMAN

There's a simple reason you should support Hope Harbour's Celebration of Hope according to Executive Director Lindsey Reis. "It can help save a life." This year marks the 10th anniversary of the Celebration of Hope Luncheon, something Reis calls "exciting." "We've watched it grow from maybe 100 people to over 500 people showing up every year." That support is huge for Columbus's only domestic violence shelter, and one of the largest in the state of Georgia.

However, Hope Harbour's mission doesn't stop at the doors of its 43-bed shelter. Their outreach program, geared toward providing services to victims who need support but not shelter as well as educating the public to try and stop domestic violence at its source, is equally important. The combination of education, outreach and protection that Hope Harbour offers is crucial in ending the cycle of domestic abuse, making the Celebration of Hope that much more important for not only the shelter but the community as a whole.

Attendees can expect a powerful speech from a local victim of domestic violence, as well as accomplished actress and keynote speaker Robin Givens, who has worked on shows like *Tyler Perry's House of Payne* and *The Cosby Show* and is herself a victim of domestic violence. Along with these speeches, there will be plenty of gift baskets raffled. Tickets are only a dollar with the chance to win \$500 in gift cards, lottery tickets, a grill basket or other exciting prizes. This, in addition to a delicious

lunch, makes Hope Harbour's Celebration of Hope Luncheon an event that not only immensely helps the community, but also brings the community together.

The slogan for this year's luncheon is "Clean up domestic violence." In recognition of this, attendees are asked to bring towels and washcloths for the shelter, but Reis encourages people to donate whatever they can, even if they aren't able to attend. Along with monetary donations, which can be submitted through their website, Hope Harbour collects physical donations as well. "We take everything but used stuffed animals," Reis explained. "Toiletries, food, clothing, furniture or anything else."

Columbus' support of Hope Harbour is paramount to their success as an institution. When it comes to issues like domestic violence, the community has to actively work to educate themselves and not allow any more lives to be damaged, and Columbus has consistently allowed Hope Harbour to work toward that goal. As Reis plainly puts it, "We couldn't do it without the community."

The event, which will be held at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center on Thursday, September 20, will run from 11:30 am - 1:00 pm. Tickets for the 10th annual Celebration of Hope Luncheon are \$40 individually or \$320 for a table of eight and can be purchased online at [HopeHarbour.org](http://HopeHarbour.org) or by calling 706.256.0238. ©



# THE GINE FILES

**B**lack and white cinematography is a thing of beauty. The meticulous lighting avoids throwing shadows on the frame. Capturing the grain of the film without making the shot look too dirty. It is an artform unto itself.

Although it's associated with "old movies," modern filmmakers continue to embrace its many charms. Alfonso Cuarón's new film, *Roma*, premieres at the Venice Film Festival later this month in all of its 70mm black-and-white glory. *Ida*, the 2015 Academy Award winner for Best Foreign Film, was an 82-minute black-and-white gem. *Nebraska*, the 2013 road comedy from Alexander Payne, had a washed-out, frozen look that evoked the bleak winters of its namesake setting.

How can I make a convert of you? How can I get you to stop asking, "Is it in color?" Here are some black-and-white masterpieces that may help you begin exploring over 50 years of cinema that you may have been ignoring. So, find yourself a television or projector with a good contrast ratio and high-quality black resolution and start watching.

How can I make a convert of you? How can I get you to stop asking Is it in color? Here are some black-and-white masterpieces that may help you begin exploring over fifty years of cinema that you may have been ignoring. So, find yourself a television or projector with a good contrast ratio and high-quality black resolution and start watching.

***The Killing*:** This 1956 heist film from master auteur Stanley Kubrick (*2001: A Space Odyssey*, *The Shining*) is a crime classic featuring one of the all-time great thriller endings. A group of men decide to rob the local racetrack. Despite their meticulous planning, things go awry. The devil is in the details, and those details make for compelling cinema in the hands of a consummate filmmaker. Lucien Ballard's black-and-white cinematography gives the film a dark, gritty underworld vibe that could never have been rendered in color.

***Logan Noir*:** Yes, that's right. Even the Marvel Universe went old school when it released this black-and-white version of the 2017 film about the final days of the former X-man Wolverine. *Logan* is a post-modern western presented within a comic book framework. The worst moment of the film is when Professor X and Logan's daughter are watching Shane to smack audiences in the face and remind them that *Logan* is a modern-day western. That flaw aside, the black-and-white reissue was a perfect match of form and substance. It's the most visually interesting comic book movie since Christopher Nolan's 2008 film *The Dark Knight*. (*Logan Noir* is still available on home video.)

***Strangers on a Train*:** This lesser-known Hitchcock classic was my August 2018 selection for the Way Down Film Society. It even served as inspiration for the 1987 Billy Crystal-Danny DeVito comedy *Throw Momma from The Train*. When two men theorize how nice it would be if someone in each of their lives just disappeared, one of the men decides to treat their discussion as more than just a theory. Robert Walker gives a subtle, Oscar-caliber performance as the madman of the pair, making this film required viewing for any actor who will play a villain. Hitchcock was a master of the black-and-white form, and his use of the medium adds to the creepy vibe of this under-rated thriller.

***The Third Man*:** There's a reason this was the first film ever released by the prestigious Criterion Collection. This tale of a pulp novelist investigating the mysterious death of his friend in post-war Vienna may be the most beautiful black-and-white movie ever filmed. It's not easy to upstage Orson Welles and Joseph Cotton, but Robert Krasker's black-and-white cinematography manages to do just that. The chase through the sewers of Vienna is a master class in lighting and deploys every nuance that black-and-white photography has to offer. If you only watch one film on my list, this is the one.

*Scott Phillips is a Columbus resident and a film writer for FilmDispenser.com. He was recently inducted into the Georgia Film Critics Association.*

# Alexanders Recognized as SERVANT LEADERS



BY BORDEN BLACK

Traditional leadership generally involves the exercise of power by one at the top of the pyramid. By comparison, the servant leader shares power, puts the needs of others first and helps people develop and perform as highly as possible. Rick and Cindy Alexander embody that leadership spirit and it was for that reason they will be honored with the Sue Marie and Bill Turner Servant Leadership Award during the Pastoral Institute's annual Gala in October.

Rick was working at Alexander Electric Company when he first heard the term and realized that his dad, Joe Alexander, was a servant leader before the concept had a name. Rick also embraced the philosophy. "It taught me you can empower and grow people and make them better employees, fathers, husbands and citizens. Servant leadership is empowering people," he explained. That tradition is now embraced by a third generation of Alexanders who continue to serve the community.

Rick has served on the boards of the Columbus State University Foundation, the Columbus Technical College Foundation, the National Infantry Museum Foundation, Girls Inc., United Way and Easter Seals. He says his service on the Pastoral Institute Board was his favorite activity.

"It was an honor to be selected by Mr. Turner to be chair after him and an honor to go through a large financial campaign and building program. It was a great

highlight of my life.”

Most recently Rick received the Frank D. Brown Achievement & Leadership Excellence Award from the CSU Alumni Association.

Cindy’s service to the community includes working on the boards of Keep Columbus Beautiful and the Columbus Botanical Garden.

The Alexanders met at Morningside Baptist Church where they have been members for more than 60 years and they have been married more than 50 years.

The Alexanders were selected to receive the award by a development committee made up of trustee board members, which goes through a vetting and selection process. The committee agreed that the Alexanders embody the spirit of the award.

At first, the couple was reluctant to be in the limelight as honorees but realize the Gala is not about them but instead about the Pastoral Institute and the legacy of William Turner.

“Cindy’s and my goal for this event is to make sure that everyone who attends, knows what a wonderful resource the Pastoral Institute is and highlight the wonderful things they have done.” Rick said.

The Sue Marie and Bill Turner Servant Leadership Gala is the primary fundraiser for the Pastoral Institute. Programs are contingent on the success of this event. Money is raised through sponsorships, purchase of tables and contributions.

According to the Pastoral Institute’s Development Director Laura Cardin, the funds are allocated to the area of greatest need that year whether it is for children’s programs, therapy group sessions or helping the homeless and transitional programs. The PI has been serving the community for over 40 years with counseling and education to individuals, couples, families and children. Counselors assess problems, provide personal growth and explore solutions from a holistic perspective.

“Cindy’s and my goal for this event is to make sure that everyone who attends, knows what a wonderful resource the Pastoral Institute is and highlight the wonderful things they have done.”

-RICK ALEXANDER



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The Gala, to be held October 4, begins with a cocktail hour followed by dinner at 7 p.m. Guests hear from the board chair about Pastoral Institute services and after dinner there is entertainment.

This year the keynote speaker is Harris III, a storyteller,

“Columbus is such a unique place, with a lot of generous donors and leaders.”

-LAURA CARDIN

illusionist and Christian comedian.

A video will introduce the honorees explaining their accomplishments and how they exemplify servant leadership followed by comments from the Alexanders.

Cardin is anticipating another successful gala. “Columbus is such a unique place, with a lot of generous donors and leaders. For our organization to be able to show our services to the community is an honor.”

Rick adds that the Pastoral institute was Mr. Turner’s favorite organization. “He understood it. And did a great job in teaching us, and others, about it. The Pastoral Institute is a resource for companies who want to lead with a servant leadership style and is a resource for individuals dealing with the problems of life.”

For that reason the Alexanders feel it is a great honor to be recognized this year with the Sue Marie and Bill Turner Servant Leadership Award. ☺

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If you were married after November 2017, we'd like to include your wedding photo in our Wedding Gallery in our January/February issue. Please send a photo of the bride and groom and include first and last names of both, wedding date and location, the photographer's name and a phone number where you can be reached. All information must be included for photo to be published. As many photos will be published as space allows.

Photos will be returned after publication if they are accompanied by a self-addressed, stamped envelope. Digital submissions will be accepted, but must be 300 dpi.

Submission Deadline is Dec. 1

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## Much Ado About Something

BY MARQUETTE McRAE MCKNIGHT



The St. Thomas Choir performed at Norwich Cathedral.

One of the many things adults miss about being kids is we don't normally get summers out of school and thus, don't get that fun summer camp experience—meeting new folks, exploring new places, learning something different and new, practicing a skill or talent, bonding with old and new friends. Fortunately, for about 100 folks—50 of them adults long away from school days—got to experience that as the St. Thomas Episcopal Church Choir and the Voices of the Valley children's choir did a choral residency at Norwich Cathedral in England. About 60 of the folks were choristers and the other 40 were what we called the "pilgrims" who accompanied us, but a grand time was had by all. Full disclosure, I sing in this choir and husband, **Rick McKnight**, organized the trip and is the choir director, but nobody gets special privileges in this hard-working choir.

Dr. **Michelle Folta Herring** led Voices of the Valley (VOV) and those voices were beyond angelic as they sang with us at Norwich Cathedral and we sang with them at the cathedrals in Bury Saint Edmunds and Ely. (More about a local connection with Bury St. Edmunds at the end of this column.) Michelle not only directed the VOV, but she also sang with the adult



The St. Thomas Choir, Voices of the Valley, parents and pilgrims gather for photo at St. John's, Cambridge.

choir, joined by **Adelyn Scott, Ron Wirt, David Bonaker, Debbie Anderson, Bob Parks, April Jacobs, MaryAnn Rahm, Payne Newsome, Susan Wirt, Kristie Sholtis, Karen Lord, Katie Holbrook, Ruth Nichols, Janet Maple, Eva Robinson, Julia Lester, Nichole Ceccatto, Louise Tullouh, Ann Burr, Martha Robert, Elizabeth Hostetter, Angelia Davis, Josh Partridge, Isiah Harper, Olivia McWaters, Jim Sholtis and Cristian Cantu**, who came all the way from Austin, Texas to rejoin his former choir peeps.

The tradition of singing and worshiping in those centuries old cathedrals, singing words that have been sung there so many times by so many voices was an amazing spiritual experience for all of us, as we sang, bathed in the sunlight coming in through the enormous stained-glass windows. The camaraderie of the entire group along with





United Way staff members and volunteers gathered to Stuff the Bus with school supplies for area children.



The Chattahoochee Council, Boy Scouts of America with its annual Distinguished Citizen Award, honored retired TSYS CEO Phil Tomlinson. He is shown here at the event with his wife Anita.

St. Thomas' priest, the Rev. **Grace Burton Edwards**, who was our spiritual leader, made it a bonding experience—much like summer camp. A mountaintop, life moment indeed. (And if you're looking for that same type of experience, we're already planning another trip to Dublin, Ireland in 2021.)

Oh, and just so the experience remains embedded in my memory, I shall always remember having dinner with a large group of folks at a rooftop restaurant in Norwich—where it was so cool, (as in cold) they turned on the outdoor heaters and brought us blankets! That was on July 9 when the temperature in Columbus was high 90s and the humidity made it seem like it was 115.

### **An Epic Poem for an Epic Community**

Despite the dog days of summer in early August, several dozen hearty souls braved the heat to see the unveiling of the latest project of the Together Campaign. This campaign has been a tri-community initiative to promote the good things about our community and collaborate with some new projects. "My River Valley" is an epic poem—a love letter to this place we call home—written by local writer and Northside High School teacher **Isiah Harper**. The word mural was designed by 2WR Architects **Scott Allen** and **Matt Crowder** and the production and installation coordinated by the ever-so-talented **Justin Krieg**—who may be my

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## SPEED

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Company officials gathered to break ground on The Oaks at Grove Park senior living community. The facility is scheduled to open next summer.



Lou Childs unveiled the SlumberPod at the product launch held at StartUp Columbus. The privacy pod, designed to fit over a portable crib or play yard when parents travel with an infant or toddler, offers a dark sleep environment. Childs and her daughter Katie Mallory invented the product and are selling it now online.

all-time favorite “get-it-done” guy on so many things good in this community. **Ross McDuffie** led the folks who braved the heat and were there to support the installation and the project including City Manager **Isaiah Hugley**, **John Hudgison**, who was there with son **Ethan** and dad, **Greg Hudgison**, **David White**, **Amy Bryan**, **Mike Venable**, **Brian Anderson**, **Robert Slay**, **Ross Horner**, **Sherricka Day**, **Kat Cannella**, **Sonya Boyd** and grandson **Wilson Ford**, **Raveeta Addison**, **Erica Walker**, **Tamika McKenzie**, **Alicia Bryan**, **Gerri Pittman**, **Andy Luker**, **Becca Zajac**, **Frank Etheridge**, **Jacy**

**Jenkins**, **Amy Walters**, **Michael Porter**, **Smiley Rachel**, **Michael Starr**, **Helen Johnson**, **Susan Kulakowski** and **Mercedes Parham**.

The best tribute came as the Rev. **Grace Burton-Edwards** noted on her Facebook page. “... One of many nice things about the poem is that when a relative newcomer recognizes the references in it, she feels like an old-timer.” That is exactly the way we wanted people to feel when they read it—no matter how long you’ve lived here, or how new you are to this great community, you’ll recognize something in this love letter to the place we call home. The entire

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MidTown Inc. honored Anne King (C) with a reception on the occasion of her retirement. Friends and family, including (L R) Jane and Jack Goldfrank, Len Williams and Alan Harkness joined in the fun, while (below) Bitsy Dedwilder presented Anne with a cake, complete with the MidTown logo.



poem, now a word mural, is located on the south side of the RiverCenter parking garage between Broadway and Front Avenue, so check it out the next time you're in Uptown.

## It's a Day-long Celebration that Lasted a Month

Some folks celebrate a birthday and some celebrate a whole week. In the case of my beloved Rick McKnight, it was more like an entire month, but since I enjoyed it all too, there are no complaints. The culmination of that celebration was a trip to Atlanta to see *The Book of Mormon* at the fabulous Fox Theatre. The show was hilarious, and we weren't surprised that a whole slew of folks from Columbus were there the same weekend including **Andy Luker** and fiancée' **Monica Elmer**, **Joe and Sarah Appleton**, **Corrin Riley** and **Kathy Riley**, **Courtney Goldsmith Leson**, **Ebony** and **Dre Robbins** and former Columbus resident **Carol Binns**.

## Sad to Say Goodbye

A grand heart and a grand laugh was one of the many ways people describe **Marie Turner Moshell** and it is with sad heart that we note her way-too-early death. Marie was dedicated to her family and her community. As chair of the board, she led the Pastoral Institute through some of its largest growth times. As a mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend, she was beloved for the kindness, grace and love she always showed for others. Thanks for being an example to all of us, Marie.

**Dequindre McGlaun** lived a long and beautiful life, leaving this world at 99 ½ and I'm sure he would have chuckled at the ½ part. Still, it was hard to say goodbye to this charmer of a gentleman who was a longtime veteran teacher in MCSD and a beloved member of the Butler, Georgia community. Earlier in this column, I mentioned a local connection to the Bury Saint Edmunds Cathedral in England. Dequindre also had a distinguished career as a bombardier in the 94th Bomb Group, during World War II and was based at Rougham Airfield, which is right next to Bury Saint Edmunds, England. Dequindre's daughter **Jan Caves** told us about a statue in the Rose Garden behind the cathedral, honoring and memorializing the 94th Bomb Group. When we got there, aided by a volunteer gardener who was easily in his 90s and knew exactly where it was, we said a prayer and sang a song in memory of Dequindre and the beautiful life he led. ☺

*Marquette McRae McKnight is the owner of Media, Marketing.. and More! Inc, a full service public relations firm. She may be reached call her at 706-660-9702 or via e-mail at marquette@mediamarketingandmore.com.*

## Through January 2019

The Columbus Museum presents “linn meyers: gazing has its limits.” linn meyers has been recognized internationally for her monumental images and contributions to the field of drawing. The Columbus Museum has commissioned the artist to create a site-specific wall drawing tailored to the architecture of the main floor’s colonnade. For more info call 706.748.2562 ext. 210 or visit columbusmuseum.com.

## SEPTEMBER

### September 3

Old Russell County Courthouse Association will hold its Labor Day Fair at the Courthouse in Seale featuring arts, crafts, food and entertainment. Admission: free.

### September 8

The Columbus Symphony Orchestra kicks off its new season with “Rachmaninoff Meets the New Piano.” Pianist Claire Huangci will christen the orchestra’s new Steinway piano with a performance of one of the most popular of all piano concertos. Brahms’ masterpiece rounds out the

concert program at RiverCenter for the Performing Arts. To purchase tickets call 1.888.332.5200 or visit the box office at Broadway and 10th St. or RiverCenter.org.

### September 15

Sickle Cell Walk-A-Thon/Parade to raise funds and awareness. For more information or registration, visit SickleCellColumbus.webs.com/events or call 706.505.2923 or 706.566.6329.

### September 19

RiverCenter for the Performing Arts presents *Something Rotten*. Set in 1595, this hilarious smash tells the story of Nick and Nigel Bottom, two brothers who are desperate to write a hit play. When a local soothsayer foretells that the future of theatre involves singing, dancing and acting at the same time, Nick and Nigel set out to write the world’s very first musical and laughter ensues. For tickets visit the box office at Broadway and 10th St. or RiverCenter.org.

### September 20

Pacelli High School is celebrating its 60th anniversary with a Go Big Red Gala. The public is invited to the event, which will be held in St. Anne-Pacelli Catholic School’s Gym. During the dinner,

attendees will hear about the school’s history from guest speaker Bishop Emeritus J. Kevin Boland. Tickets are \$40 per person. To make a reservation, visit BeAViking.com/anniversary.

### September 21

The Alzheimer’s Association Walk to End Alzheimer’s in Uptown Columbus. Registration begins at 5 p.m. Register as a team captain, join a team or sign up to walk as an individual at ALZ.org/walk.

### September 21 - October 7


The Springer Opera House presents *Mamma Mia!* On the eve of her wedding, Sophie’s quest to discover the identity of her father brings three men from her mother’s past back into her life for the first time in 20 years. Must-see theatre with all of your favorite ABBA songs, non-stop laughs and explosive dance numbers. For tickets, call the Springer Box office at 706.327.3688 or visit SpringerOperaHouse.org.

### September 22 - February 10, 2019

The Columbus Museum presents “Our Stories Live Here: 65 Years of the Mildred L. Terry Public Library.” This exhibition examines the history of this iconic gathering place from the library’s origins

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and early successes, through the dramatic integration of the Columbus public library system in the '60s and the threat of the Mildred L. Terry Public Library's closure, to its many public programs and continuing influence today. Interviews collected by StoryCorps and the library during its Mildred Terry Memory Project in 2015 will be an integral part of the exhibition, as well as books, photographs, documents and artifacts from the library's archives. For more info call 706.748.2562 ext. 210 or visit columbusmuseum.com.

### September 29

The Schwob School of Music at Columbus State University will present a free concert as a part of Schwob Flute Day at 7:30 p.m. in Legacy Hall at the RiverCenter for the Performing Arts, Broadway and 10th St.

## OCTOBER

### October 6

The Georgia chapter of Autism Speaks will hold its 2018 Columbus Autism Speaks Walk event at Woodruff Riverfront Park. The event will include a 1.75-mile walk around downtown and a Community

Resource Fair to connect families with local educational resources, therapists, recreational programs and child-friendly activities. To register visit [AutismSpeaks.org/Walk](http://AutismSpeaks.org/Walk) or contact Heather Baker at [GeorgiaWalk@autismspeaks.org](mailto:GeorgiaWalk@autismspeaks.org).

### October 16 & 17

RiverCenter for the Performing Arts presents *The Wizard of Oz*. It's a faithful adaptation of the film, recreating the dialogue and structure of the MGM classic nearly scene for scene, though it is adapted for live stage performance. For tickets, visit the box office at Broadway and 10th St. or [RiverCenter.org](http://RiverCenter.org).

### October 19

The Stewart Community Home presents an evening of dinner and dancing to the music of the Swingin' Medallions to kick off their Restoring Hope: Restoring Home Capital Campaign. The event will be held at the Columbus Convention and Trade Center. Tickets are \$135 each. For more information visit [StewartCommunityHome.com](http://StewartCommunityHome.com).

### October 19 & 20

The Way Down Film Festival features films curated into six thematic genre

blocks, with each screening of varying short films running 70-90 minutes. Viewed on a state-of-the art projector with a pristine sound system, all film screenings take place on the Main Stage of the Springer Opera House. For tickets or more information visit [WayDownFilmFest.com](http://WayDownFilmFest.com).

### October 20

Don't miss BotOberfest, a robotic competition hosted by Fort Benning and the Greater Columbus Chamber of Commerce showcasing ground robotics being used in defense and other military divisions. Entries will come from high school students, military engineers and international companies. The event will include drone races, robot wars (Battlebots) and a cross-domain (xD) maneuver challenge over land, air and water, all held on the Columbus riverfront. For more information, email [mr.braski@gmail.com](mailto:mr.braski@gmail.com) or call 706.489.9094.

### October 26

RiverCenter for the Performing Arts presents Lyle Lovett and Robert Earl Keen in concert. For tickets, visit the box office at Broadway and 10th St. or [RiverCenter.org](http://RiverCenter.org).

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## Uptown Vietnam Cuisine

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-30-

by Mike Owen

## Interstate-185 is Ready When You Are

One of the things I dislike about so much local social media is how it's become a festival of bitter folks who only want to gripe about pretty much every aspect of Columbus.

Should these sites just be cheerleaders? Of course not. But the level of vitriol and often ridiculous griping often send me elsewhere. But usually not until I've reminded these unhappy souls that I-185 is open for business.

Does Columbus have problems? Of course it does. Name a city that doesn't. But I've lived here for over half my 63 years, after being born and raised in Atlanta. And it's my opinion that this city, especially but certainly not solely the downtown area, has undergone nothing short of a renaissance in those years.

You're certainly welcome to disagree. There is no shame in being wrong.

When I moved here in 1986, Columbus was pretty much a dump. I'm sure Green Island Hills was nice and Brookstone and all that, but downtown was a certifiable wreck, as was the Historic District and numerous other less prosperous places.

Downtown was a ghost town after dark. The only after-hours "commerce" taking place downtown was the kind the Chamber doesn't mention in glossy brochures.

There was no TSYS campus. As I recall, there was a car dealership and a feed and seed store around there, but for the most part it looked like the area between TSYS and Bibb City today. Not a garden spot.

And come to think of it, back then, Bibb City looked about the same, too. But it too is undergoing a renaissance of its own. People are buying the old mill cottages, renovating them and revitalizing the neighborhood.

More power to them.

Back downtown, there were few if any decent places to eat back then. Country's was still a functioning bus station, so unless you wanted to eat at the Raymond Rowe Tearoom (and I could tolerate only so much tuna salad), Ok Sun's (which was actually pretty good) or get a stale old chili dog from a street vendor or a pool hall, you had to get in the car and go somewhere else.

CSU was still Columbus College without even a suggestion of a downtown campus, and all the growth and vigor it would bring.

Synovus' grand riverfront presence didn't exist.

The Historic District was a dump, with few if any of the grand old houses being renovated, as so many have been and are still being today.

There was no RiverWalk, no River Club and no riverfront activity at all.

The mills were shutting down, with no plans to one day turn them into upscale residences.

There was no 13th Street Bridge, but back then, why would you have wanted one?

The old Civic Center was a leaking mess and the Columbus Symphony played in the Three Arts Theater. To call either a dump would be to risk slandering dumps everywhere.

Police headquarters was an embarrassing facility. It's been replaced with a modern Public Safety building, befitting the good, brave and underpaid folks who work there.

There was no RiverCenter for the Performing Arts and the Springer was a decaying mess. In fact, the Springer came perilously close to being demolished. God and Dot McClure (and not necessarily in that order) intervened, thank ... well, Dot

and God.

Away from downtown, there was no National Infantry Museum, no Oxbow Meadows or Oxbow Creek, no Westville complex being built nearby. Bull Creek Golf Course was 18 holes and Maple Ridge didn't exist. The world-class Cooper Creek Tennis Center was a shard of its present self.

There was no Fall Line Trace.

Baker Village, Peabody and Booker T. Washington apartments were places no one wanted to live. Now, they've been replaced with much nicer mixed-income complexes.

The main library was a decaying joke. Today, it's a fitting facility, sitting next to a world-class natatorium (which, granted, needs some work earlier than one would think it should).

The Columbus Museum was housed in an old Aaron Rents building on Broadway.

The South Commons was still a ratty old 9-hole golf course, and not the world-class softball facility it is today.

I could go on, and I'm sure I've missed a few things I should have noted. But I hope you've gotten my point.

Is there still work to do? Of course. Crime, public education, poverty and urban blight need considerable attention. But again, show me a city this size that doesn't need such work.

The bottom line is anyone who doesn't think Columbus is a much, much nicer place to live and work now than it was then hasn't been paying much attention over the last 30-odd years ... or just hasn't wanted to. **C**

---

*Mike Owen was born and raised in Atlanta and came to Columbus in 1986 to work for the Ledger-Enquirer, which he did for 31 years, until his retirement. He intends to grow old, die and be buried here, hopefully no time soon.*



A man wearing a light-colored cowboy hat and a blue and white striped shirt is embracing a woman from behind. The woman is also wearing a blue and white striped shirt and has her eyes closed, leaning her head against the man's chest. They are standing in a field with a blurred background, suggesting a rural or outdoor setting. The lighting is soft and natural, creating a warm and intimate atmosphere.

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