

AGING IN ATLANTA

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JOIN US AS WE EXPLORE WHAT IT MEANS TO BE HAPPY AND HEALTHY BEYOND 55



Josie Bailey has been weaving vibrant narratives for audiences across the South since 1993. COURTESY

BABY BOOM
BUSINESSES

Storyteller is quite the story herself

Josie Bailey turns delighting children into her life's work.

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For the AJC

Smyrna resident Josie Bailey often finds herself the center of attention as she spins glittering narratives about animals and people. She throws herself into her performances, bringing characters to life with different dialects and volumes as she marches up and down in front of crowds young and old, dragging out props – stuffed animals and clothing items. She often calls up delighted young viewers to participate.

Although she's steadily honed her craft of storytelling over the past 30 years, there have been moments that she's thought about quitting, but the stories and the people have always pulled her back.

"Every time I give it up, somebody will call me and book me, and I'm falling in love with it all over again," she told the AJC.

Vibrant narratives

Bailey's stories began when her son was in fourth grade at Riverside Elementary School in Mableton.

"I went to a teacher's meeting, and I asked the teacher, how could I help him do better in school? She said that students usually do better when the parents volunteer."

The teacher asked her what she loved doing.

"I love reading stories to my children," Bailey recalled answering.

Her job as a warehouse receptionist had recently ended, and she'd begun her own business typing, so she had some extra time. She began reading at the school, and she quickly became a hit, so she branched out to other teachers' rooms.

"I started going at 8 in the morning and stayed all day till school closed, and I'd go to every classroom in the school reading these stories," she said.

She made an impression. At an end-of-the-year school meeting, she read one of her favorite poems, "Morning," by Paul Laurence Dunbar. The kindergartners joined

Bailey continued on S2

TRAVEL

Summer brings new adventures



An Ageless Adventures group at the Grand Canyon in Arizona. Many people, particularly seniors, prefer to travel to places near and far as part of a group, for security, companionship and other reasons. COURTESY

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For the AJC

Sweeping mountain views, pristine beaches, endless ocean horizons. All-inclusive group trips, and budget-planned family excursions. Travel options for older adults this summer hold all kinds of promise and endless options. Here are some tips for where to go and how to get there:

Two types of travelers

The way Jacque Lederman sees it, there are two types of travelers: those who prefer group travel and those who like to plan things independently. She and her husband, Kent, started Stockbridge-based Ageless Adventures in 2017, offering day-trip, motor coach, and fly-out opportunities to travelers ages 55 and up, although anyone can join a group.

"It's two different mind-

sets, and it does come into play with how one goes about choosing experiences. I would say group travel would tend to serve those who do have some resources at their disposal," she said. "It does cost more to go as a group because you're paying for the services of those who are planning and leading and all the transport. ... There is value in it with the less stress and all of that. The budget trav-

Travel continued on S2

MUSEUMS

5 less-known, must-visit museums in metro area

Learn more about money, computers and your Capitol.

By Karon Warren
For the AJC

While Atlanta has a lot of great museums such as the High Museum of Art and Fernbank Museum, there are many other ones you can visit for International Museum Day on May 18. So check out these five museums that might not be on

your radar, which you can also visit throughout the year.

Atlanta Monetary Museum

1000 Peachtree St. Atlanta. Free group guided tours scheduled by appointment only. 404-498-8500. atlantafed.org/education/visit/atlanta?item=c-734de94-5b76-460a-8832-f89606226b93

Whether you are a coin collector or just a fan of cash, the Federal Reserve Bank of

Atlanta's Monetary Museum is worth a visit. This free museum offers self-guided tours wherein you'll learn about the history of money.

"See money in action," said Amy Hennessey, director of outreach and economic education at the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta. "In addition to viewing our collection of historic artifacts, coins, and currency that tell the story of money from barter to the modern era, you

Museum continued on S2



Delta Flight Museum, housed in two 1940s hangars, tell the story of Atlanta's favorite airline through exhibits and aircraft on display. HYOSUB SHIN/HYOSUB.SHIN@AJC.COM



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AGING IN ATLANTA

Bailey

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in and knew the whole thing by heart.

“All the teachers were shocked, the parents were shocked, I was shocked,” Bailey said.

A start in storytelling

After one of the teachers told her she could get paid for storytelling, Bailey visited the Owl’s Tree Bookstore in Powder Springs intending to audition in front of then-owner Virginia Meldrum for a festival Meldrum oversaw at the time.

“I picked up the book and started reading, and she said, ‘Nobody’s going to pay you to read a story, but if you put the book down, I’ll pay you,’” Bailey recalled. “I had read the story all year, so you know, I know it by now. I put the book down and I told the story. She hired me for \$25 for 30 minutes.”

Bailey started out telling stories in the bookstore on Saturdays, and she joined the festival lineup shortly afterward. That was 1993. She’s been weaving vibrant narratives for audiences across the South ever since.

Born in Senoia, Bailey settled in Atlanta after graduating from Georgia State University with a degree in social work. When she began telling stories, her adoptive city took note of her newly unlocked talent. Things snowballed after the bookstore gig.

“Whenever I would tell stories, people would come up to me and say, ‘Do you do this for other people?’” she recalled.

Appearances at schools and libraries proliferated, and Bailey had to tackle a learning curve that included respecting others’ work.

“When I very first started telling stories, I knew that I couldn’t just take somebody’s stories and tell them. I had to use public domain stories,” she said.

Her present catalog includes fairy tales, folk tales and stories with spiritual leanings.

Creative challenges

These days, she travels throughout the metro area, up into North Georgia, and even to South Carolina and Alabama. Her biggest months are kids’ summer breaks in June and July, and February, Black History Month. As summer approaches, she has gigs booked at libraries, and she performs regularly at festivals and venues like The Wren’s Nest in Atlanta’s West End.

At this point, although she plans to continue with live performances, she’s looking to add other revenue streams. She’s written three children’s books, and during the pandemic, she started recording her stories to DVD, which she’s now looking to market. Like many other creatives, she finds marketing an uphill push.

“The challenge is because we’re performing artists, that’s what we do, that’s what we know,” she said. “We aren’t that great in the business part and the marketing part and all of that.”

The income fluctuates, but she persists out of a visceral tie to her craft.

“The challenge is, sometimes, it’s difficult to eat,” she said laughing. “It’s either feast or famine. ... Over the years I’ve often said, ‘I’m going to give this up – I just cannot make a living out of it.’ I love it, so I just cannot (give it up).”

Hear some of storyteller Josie Bailey’s stories and see a schedule of her upcoming appearances at [josiebailey.com](#).

“It’s either feast or famine... Over the years I’ve often said, ‘I’m going to give this up – I just cannot make a living out of it.’ I love it, so I just cannot (give it up).”

Josie Bailey

Summer

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eler, or maybe even just simply the self-planner, is more inclined to get in the car and drive.”

For those considering local trips this summer, Lederman recommends state parks, museums and zoos.

“I would encourage people, if they live here and they like to drive and plan their own travel, to check out our state parks for the summer or national historic sites. We have so many terrific museums in Georgia – and botanical gardens,” she said.

“You could get creative and simply choose an area or an interest that you would like to explore this summer. ... That can really provide an interesting itinerary. And then, do an online search for that interest or region.”

Her state park picks include Richard B. Russell State Park near Elberton, with its lake opportunities, and Vogel State Park in the mountains of Union County.

Roosevelt State Park in Pine Mountain, she pointed out, has lots of things to see nearby, including Callaway Gardens and the Little White House.

And Cumberland Island National Seashore is a great overnight or weekend option that offers glimpses of wild horses.

National parks, with their discount options for seniors, are great for a fly-out adventure, Lederman suggested.

“Many people pick a region and just go explore the parks, and that’s a great summertime thing to do,” she said. “The closest actual park (for metro Atlantans) would be the Smoky Mountain National Park. You (also) could go to Florida – the Everglades.”

Northern Michigan, Lederman said, is “off the beaten path,” and visitors can experience beautiful small towns and dunes near Lake Michigan and tour Sleeping Bear National Seashore and Mackinac Island.

Cruising, she suggested, is great for older adults who aren’t up for as much walking, and this mode of travel appeals to budgets across the board.

Alaska, with its stunning mountain and water views, is one of Lederman’s favorite cruising destinations, and she also recommends cruising through New England, beginning in Boston or New York City and on into Canada.

Local and day-trip draws

Senior University of Greater Atlanta is a Tucker-based nonprofit catering to participants ages 55 and up with educational classes and trips.

There’s an international component to the travel, but Norman Slawsky, 74, a past president of SUGA, spoke to the AJC mainly about local excursions.

Day trips are a significant draw. The group has been to the Carter Center near Poncey-Highland in Atlanta and to Cartersville to see the Booth Western Art Museum and the Telus Science Museum.

SUGA often arranges a



George and Jill Brown enjoy a visit to County Kerry, Ireland. George runs GTB Travel, an Atlanta-based agency focused on senior travel. COURTESY

GET TRAVELING

These groups cater to local seniors interested in traveling locally, across the nation, and around the world.

- Senior University of Greater Atlanta: [su-ga.org](#)
- Ageless Adventures: [agelessadventures.net](#)
- GTB Travel: [gtbtravel.com](#)

tour guide for these trips, and it’s a plus, Slawsky said, when there’s a cafe on-site like at the Carter Center.

About a year ago, the group traveled via rented bus to Montgomery, Ala., to see The National Memorial for Peace and Justice.

“It takes about two and a half hours each way,” Slawsky said. “It was a long day, but we managed to do it. I think people found it to be a very worthwhile trip.”

The group has also stayed in town for backstage tours at venues like the Fox Theater, he said.

International considerations

George Brown, 78, owns GTB Travel, another agency geared toward senior travelers. The Druid Hills resident coordinates several international and domestic trips each year.

Recent destinations have included Kentucky, Alaska and Ireland.

Atlanta, he said, is a great place for seniors to fly out of because there are so many nonstop flights.

“From Atlanta, you can get anywhere in the world in a day,” he said. “Each time you change airports, the anxiety of being late or missing (a flight), or if you have to go through customs, really makes travel more difficult.”

Nonstop flights, he pointed out, also reduce the risk of lost luggage. Travelers who do need to transfer flights need to allow enough time; a 50-minute, airline-scheduled transfer is not long enough, Brown



An Ageless Adventures group poses for a memory at Niagara Falls. COURTESY

said.

“It’s much better to allow extra time in your transit than cut it too close,” he said. “I always tell people if it’s an international flight, you should look for three hours or more.”

He advises scheduling around school holidays and avoiding midsummer price spikes.

“The great thing for seniors, if we’re retired, is that we can choose when to travel,” he said.

May and June are great times to go just about anywhere, he said.

Seniors benefit by looking for tour programs with last-minute discounts as companies try to fill their participation limits.

Domestic destinations that work particularly well that time of year include Santa Fe, New Mexico, with its abundance of history and a topography that differs sharply from Atlanta’s, he said. It’s a destination where travelers can settle in for a few nights and see Native American pueblo dwellings and the Museum of International Folk Art.

The Hudson River Valley in upstate New York, with its agricultural beauty, is another place Brown recommends for a few days away.

Seniors looking to travel

to Europe should research England, Scotland and Ireland this time of year, he said.

“Their spring will be a little later than ours,” he said. “Even June is great for there.”

Spring is also a good time to visit Japan, as are September and October, he said.

Brown will be leading a 32-person trip to Scotland soon. The trip kicks off with a nonstop flight from Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport to Edinburgh. The group will spend a few days in Scotland’s capital.

Then, they’ll head to the Highlands before traveling to the country’s west coast to the isles of Mull and Iona and Glasgow.

They’ll take a train from Glasgow to London, an activity Brown recommends for trips abroad.

“Americans don’t have great passenger trains. And so I say, when you go to Europe, go first class. It doesn’t cost that much more,” he said.

The group will end the Scotland trip with a six-day transatlantic cruise back to New York. Group participants will likely find benefit in the built-in companionship, along with the convenience and safety, he said.

“It gets to the point where you come to value the group

for the safety and security,” he said. “Someone else is making the arrangements. Probably three-quarters of the people that travel with us are women that live alone. They have that security, but also the added benefit of the enjoyment of traveling with the group.”

Learning opportunities

Inevitably, with group travel, relationships blossom.

“We’ve seen lots of friendships – even a couple of romances – because of our trips – camaraderie,” Lederman said. “Also, group travel provides learning opportunities sometimes that people wouldn’t experience on their own.”

Overall, people who choose to travel to destinations near or far benefit from expanded worldviews and emotional capacities, she said.

“It helps people to be more physically active to travel,” she said. “It aids in promoting mental health and emotional well-being.”

“I’d say travel does expand our understanding of other people groups in our world. It enlarges our world to travel. It’s very beneficial just from an emotional and physical health standpoint.”

Museum

continued from S1

can watch our cash-processing and automated vault operations. You also learn about the Federal Reserve’s essential role in the U.S. economy.”

Computer Museum of America

5000 Commerce Pkwy. Roswell. Tickets are \$15 for adults, \$10 for ages 4-17, \$12 for adults 65+, \$40 for family of 4, free for children 3 and under. 770-695-0651. [gacapitoltours@uga.edu](#). [computermuseumofamerica.org](#)

The Computer Museum of America examines the past, present, and future of technology. Visitors can see

such artifacts as a rotary telephone, transistor radio, the original Apple-I and a Nintendo Game Boy, plus many others. They also can learn how supercomputers affect day-to-day life and find out about the computers NASA used in the race to space.

David J. Sencer CDC Museum

1600 Clifton Road NE, Atlanta. Free admission. 404-639-0830. [cdc.gov/museum/index.htm](#)

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention does a lot of work to protect public health. You can take a deeper dive into those efforts at the David J. Sencer CDC Museum.

“Find out why we are in Atlanta and how CDC responds to public health

threats – everything from anthrax and accidents to Zika,” said museum director Judy M. Gantt. “You’ll find fascinating objects, inspiring media and wonderful photographs that tell the stories of the agency’s many successes in our 77-year journey to protect health and improve lives.”

While the museum is free to visit, all visitors age 18 and older will need to bring a government-issued ID with them.

Georgia Capitol Museum

206 State Capitol, Atlanta. Free admission. 404-463-4536. [gacapitoltours@uga.edu](#). [libs.uga.edu/capitolmuseum/museum/index.html](#)

While the Georgia Capitol is where new state laws

comes to life, it also is home to state history. The Georgia Capitol Museum documents not only the history of the building itself but also the history of events that have occurred here.

The museum showcases most of its exhibits on the fourth floor, but visitors will also be able to experience exhibits, memorials and artwork displayed throughout the building. Stop by the Capitol Tour Desk for a brochure of a self-guided tour, or print one from the museum website and bring it with you.

Delta Flight Museum

1060 Delta Blvd. Building B, Department 914, Atlanta. Full museum admission is \$13.77 for ages 18-64, \$11.48 for 65+, \$9.18 for ages 5-17,

and free for children 4 and under. 404-715-7886. [museum.delta.org/delta.com](#). [deltamuseum.org/home](#)

Many metro Atlantans fly with Delta Air Lines every year at Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport. But did you know there’s a museum documenting the airline’s history?

“The Delta Flight Museum showcases the history of Delta and its family airlines in two 1940s aircraft maintenance hangars,” said executive director Kelley Moore. “The museum has aircraft and exhibits on display, as well as a full-motion simulator for those that want to enhance their visit. We’re a family-friendly destination for aviation enthusiasts, history buffs, and avid travelers alike.”

AGING IN ATLANTA

EQUESTRIAN FAMILY

Father and son train world champion horses

Their stable in northwest Georgia known for success.

By Cat Webb
Rome News-Tribune

With the number of world championships he’s helped bring home, you’d think Nick Price would be a little less humble. But when you ask him about his horse training, he points the success right back at the riders.

Price has been around horses his whole life – his father, Alan, is a horse trainer, too. He’s been riding since he was a kid, and straight after high school he started working at Price Stables, the family barn in Fairmount, in northwest Georgia. “We’ve done really good. We’ve been blessed,” Price said. “I’ve showed a lot of horses in my life since I was a kid, but I never thought I would ever stand at the Celebration on the bricks as a World Grand Champion. I never thought it would happen.”

Now married with two sons, Price runs the barn together with his father. They have twenty Tennessee Walking Horses at their facility, all trained by the Prices. Many are champions, and the two most notable are world champions Dobie Gray and Iron Door.

Those horses – and, in total, ten of the horses at Price Stables – are owned by horsewoman Sarah Burks. Burks is a lifelong horse lover and equestrian, winning the Tennessee Walking Horse Celebration in 1982.

She got out of the horse business a couple of years later, and battled drug addiction. Her biggest win, she declares, is that she’s been sober for 20 years as of March 19.

Thanks to the Prices, Burks

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came back onto the equestrian scene about seven years ago, and has been competing and winning ever since.

“She’s spent a lot of money with us and put a lot of time into it, and she’s stuck with me,” Price said.

Whereas some owners might get frustrated when their horses aren’t immediately where they need to be, Burks let Price take his time with her horses – and it’s definitely worked out for everybody.

“She said ‘I want you to do my horse training’ and she gave me the opportunity to spend enough time with one to get it where I wanted it,” Price said. “And a lot of people don’t have that patience.”

Burks connected with Nick and Alan Price largely by chance. She went to a horse show and ran into them in the parking lot. Alan Price knew her, and said that he wanted to get her back on a horse after a long absence was showing.

“He said, ‘I want to put you back in the show ring,’” Burks said.

Burks initially declined. Her husband had passed away and she hadn’t been on



Nick and Alan Price with Iron Door and Sarah Coffee Burks, crowned as 2023 Amateur World Grand Champions. COURTESY

a horse in years. Yet, a week or two later Burks bought a horse from the Prices. And then another. Now, she has 10 horses at Price Stables, and Price said she’s probably owned about a hundred off and on since.

Burks knows everything about her horses, about their bloodline, their personalities, and how they’ve taken to training.

And she definitely loves and spoils them – her horses look for treats from every person who walks past them. Iron Door, in particular, loves peppermints.

Burks and Nick Price hit it off immediately, as she tells it. She loved the trainer she had back in the 1980s, but she says that she loves Price’s training even more.

“I couldn’t have done anything on those horses if anybody but Nick had trained them,” Burks said.

It’s certainly in his blood.



Iron Door is a world champion Tennessee Walking Horse trained at Price Stables in Fairmount.

PHOTO COURTESY OF CAT WEBB

Price first learned to ride when he was five. And his dad learned to ride when he was a kid, too.

“That’s the only thing I’ve ever done,” Price said. “I graduated high school and headed right here and went to work.”

All Price Stables does is

train Tennessee Walking Horses. The training done to get that signature gait is intensive.

It’s taken Price years to get Burks’ horses to where he wants them to be, two or three years for Iron Door specifically. But now that they’re there, they’re cer-

tainly winners.

“We got to doing good and winning, and now we go compete with the biggest and the best,” Price said.

But, of course, he deflects that success right back onto Burks.

“She brought me something to work with,” he said. “If I hadn’t had those great horses to work with. ... She’s done more than she’s let on.”

Price does have other clients, four or five others who have him train their Walking Horses. He said some parts of the year are busier than others, but that they tend to keep around 20 horses at any given time right now.

This time of year, they’re getting busy – and not because of extra horses. The Prices just got back from showing their horses, and would be right back out on the road the next week to show again. They would be busy every weekend starting in April, showing off their Tennessee Walking Horses in different competitions.

“I say we’ll do good this year,” Price said. “We got a new horse we bought last fall named Jose’s Power Broker and he’s got a heck of a show record. And he’s a real good horse. So I would say we’ll have a really good year.”

He also has high hopes for Iron Door, who Price said was kind of “old faithful” because he always nets them a win. And though Iron Door is a champion, he’s also well-loved, and very much Burks’ baby.

“I’ll tell you what he is, he’s a big pet is what he is,” Price said. “We’ve spoiled him.”

And really, that applies to all the horses there. They have large, clean stalls, good food, and a facility that’s well-loved and well-maintained. And trainers and riders that not only want to win, but also care deeply for their animals.

BATTLING LONELINESS

Creative efforts help seniors avoid social isolation woes

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For the AJC

Lisa Dietrich was looking for a little companionship when she learned about the Atlanta Regional Commission’s One2One Telephone Reassurance Program for people over 60.

Dietrich, 65, is disabled, and she’d begun to feel isolated while her husband was at work. Even the presence of an emotional support pet wasn’t enough to offset the feelings.

“I was reading this newsletter ... and it showed a program about One2One explaining how you would receive phone calls twice a week,” she told the AJC. “I thought, ‘I wonder if that would be good for me.’ Then, all of a sudden, a light went off in my head. I said, ‘I could be a volunteer.’”

The Acworth resident recalled some trepidation before she started her gig as a volunteer caller in May 2023. “Once we started, I had two clients,” she said. “I was so excited and nervous at the same time.”

Dietrich’s feelings of loneliness and those of the clients she took on aren’t uncommon in an aging population. According to the World Health Organization, about a quarter of older people worldwide face social isolation. In response, the WHO established its Commission on Social Connection.

Locally, an emphasis on dialogue and understanding stories is helping agencies and organizations better serve older residents at risk of social isolation.

The pandemic signifi-

cantly changed some of these efforts. Such was the case with the ARC, according to Tamika Brown, the organization’s volunteer engagement project supervisor. Before the pandemic, she explained, the ARC, which serves as Atlanta’s Area Agency on Aging, had been educating the community on social isolation through in-person presentations.

“We were going into communities and actually doing presentations on the impacts and what it looks like when folks are lonely and socially isolated,” she said. “Once the pandemic hit, we were already well ramped up to launch the telephone reassurance project. ... Our clients tend to be those folks who might get missed because they don’t necessarily qualify for a service right now, but they are absolutely in need of some relationships – someone to call and to check in. That is why we implemented this project.”

Older adults can be connected with One2One through Empowerline.org, designed to guide the public to regional services. They’ll receive two phone calls a week, and conversation length varies according to clients’ needs. “We don’t set a clock,” Brown said. “That is what makes our program different.”

Nicola Williams oversees the One2One program. Empowerline callers, she said, go through a screening process for appropriate services. Those at a high risk of isolation get a One2One referral.

Tim Knight, executive

TIPS FOR STAVING OFF LONELINESS

Tim Knight, executive director of training and organizational development for Isakson Living senior communities, has the following tips for seniors looking to counteract isolation:

- **Stay busy:** Interact with others on a daily basis through group events, games, music therapy, exercise classes, church services, adult day programs, etc.
- **Celebrate each day:** Schedule time for celebrations in your life, like birthdays and anniversaries, and plan to spend time in person or on the phone.
- **Be spontaneous:** Say “yes” to unplanned opportunities.
- **Do things together:** Share coffee, meals, exercise, classes with a friend, and you’ll be more likely to want to connect with that person and do those activities more often.
- **Connect through conversation:** Share the origins of a family recipe at meal time, look at pictures that support conversation.
- **Stay active:** Get physical exercise through classes, walking clubs or outdoor games. Group activities provide socialization and accountability, too.
- **Use your brain:** Stimulate cognitive function with art or music classes, pet therapy and relaxation activities like massage, yoga or meditation.
- **Go outside:** Fresh air, nature and exercise are good for your health and make you more likely to interact with others.
- **Have faith:** Religious and spiritual events can provide community, interaction and purpose.
- **Enjoy the little things:** Being with another person and supporting each other emotionally builds connection.

director of training and organizational development for Isakson Living senior communities throughout Atlanta, voiced feelings of affirmation regarding the formation of the Commission on Social Connection.

“I really think it validated that what we’re doing is the right thing,” he said.

The “right thing” for Isakson’s staff means making residents’ stories part of their overall experience from the beginning as a way to limit loneliness as they transition to a new chapter of their lives.

“We start from day one before people even move in with us getting to know them,” Knight said. “Our whole model of care is based on relationships and really knowing people and knowing their stories and what they’re bringing into the community.”

Team members collect information from residents and their families to build life stories. Tangible items on display outside rooms help with these efforts, especially on memory care units.

“We had a gardener who had gardening tools and gloves and things. She was a Master Gardener,” Knight said. “Anytime she was having a really bad day and struggling with dementia, we could take her to that wall and build stories around what she had done in her past.”

In this way, he explained, Isakson team members build conversations and then solidify relationships with residents. These efforts, he said, can help ease the move to a totally new setting where social connection might look significantly different than what members have been used to.

HEALTH

If the shoe fits, that’s a good thing

Choosing the right footwear helps keep you moving.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

The shoes we wear every day fulfill a very important need. They keep us comfortable as we move about and help us maintain our balance, especially as we age.

What goes into ensuring you’ve got the perfect fit in the shoe you wear every day? More than you’d think.

“A proper fitting shoe is important and most people don’t know what a proper fitting shoe means; they really do need to be fitted,” podiatrist Steven Weiskopf, DPM, of Village Podiatry, an Upperline Health Company, told the AJC.

Finding the right fit goes beyond your shoe size. It’s also about matching the shoe to your physical needs, how you’ll move when you wear the shoe, and any mobility limitations you might be experiencing.

Even the material of the shoe itself matters when looking for just the right one. “All leather shoes, even sneakers, are not a great idea,” Weiskopf said.

He recommends mesh shoes, especially for every day. The material is breathable and less stiff, especially at the toe where it should give as you walk.

You may also want to consider adding arch support to your shoe.

“Arch supports can be really helpful; they can help restore some cushioning to the bottom of the foot, reducing pain,” Weiskopf said.

Although they offer many positives, Steve DeMoss, owner and general man-

ager of Big Peach Running Co. in Marietta, suggests looking at the shoe’s performance on its own and adding arch support only to fit a need not met by the shoe itself.

Aging and proper footwear become an essential conversation because your feet change as you get older.

“The skin on the feet gets thinner and the cushioning on the bottom of your foot is less, so it’s even more important as we age to have proper-fitting shoes,” Weiskopf said.

This change can make you more susceptible to blisters. You may notice you need more cushioning in your shoe to keep your feet from hurting.

Balance can also present an issue that requires you to rethink what shoe is best for you.

“Balance becomes a huge issue as patients become older, and having the right shoe or even an assistive device, even just around the house, can help decrease risk,” Weiskopf said.

The key, according to DeMoss, is to find “comfort that inspires confidence.” This means having a stable base underfoot and avoiding shoes that have too much padding or feel too soft when walking around.

With all of these things to take into consideration, regardless of the type of shoe you’re shopping for, remember that, especially as you age, shoes provide an essential function.

“Shoes should take the stress off feet and align things all the way up the chain,” DeMoss said. “That’s why fit, stability, and the experience underfoot when you’re walking every day should all factor into finding the perfect shoe.”

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASSISTED LIVING

Are you ready for a move to assisted living?

If so, here are tips for finding the right community for you.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

Shifting from being a homeowner to living to a more communal setting is a major lifestyle change, but one you can take control of for yourself.

Moving to assisted living isn't something that happens overnight, but there are signs it might be time for the change.

"Have you fallen a couple of times or are you having balance issues? Are you tripping over your own feet? These are the questions to think about," Shari Bayer, chief marketing and communications officer for Jewish Home Life told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

'Social piece'

Memory issues may also be a sign, especially if you find yourself forgetting to take medications on a regular basis.

These signs belong in what Bayer calls the "safety" bucket, but there's also the "social" bucket to think about. "In assisted living, one of the biggest benefits is the social piece," she said.

If you find yourself not going out or socializing as

much as you'd like, or even eating alone frequently, assisted living might provide you with company you once had.

Levels of care

Another telltale sign is if you and your spouse require different levels of care.

"Moving to assisted living keeps couples together and provides the right care for the spouse who needs it," Eddie Biggers, founder and CEO of Where the Heart Is Atlanta told the AJC.

To find the right assisted living community, you need to look around and take into consideration your budget, care needs, location and availability. If this process feels overwhelming, there's help out there.

For Biggers, hunting for assisted living is a full-service, full-time job.

"It's not just about providing a list of options. We schedule tours and go with (you) to ask the questions you might not know to ask," he said.

With some communities also offering memory care units and other services, you have a variety of options. This allows you to find a place that's appropriate based on what's going on with you, according to Biggers.

Once you can check off that a place meets your care needs, the next step is to

see how it stacks up to your social expectations.

"We don't plan activities based on what we think seniors want, we ask them and build our calendar around it so every resident has some purposeful activity," Bayer said. "The key is finding at least one thing they want to do because they like and enjoy it."

A community

Beyond that, there's also the community itself – how the individuals get along.

"It's really heartwarming, actually, they keep up with each other, check on each other, know who's supposed to be where and when they're missing," Bayer said, specifically in regards to the William Bremen Jewish Home.

Once you make your selection and move in, expect a period of adjustment. You are, after all, breaking your long-term routines to relocate. Give yourself time to establish new routines, what Bayer calls a "learning period."

You can use this time to set your own parameters, decide how involved you want to get in the community and how much time you spend by yourself. Allow this balance to shift as you get more comfortable with your neighbors.

In the end, no matter your



Older adults will begin to outnumber young people in the United States in the coming decade. DREAMSTIME/TNS

process for finding the ideal living situation for yourself as you age, it's important to remember that moving into assisted living can be an opportunity to redefine your lifestyle for the better.

"Assisted living allows you to take advantage of the social and safety nets that come along with communal living, while also having the support of new and old friends, learning new things and just living your best life possible every moment," Bayer said.



One important barrier for older adults: Unlike younger adults with disabilities, many seniors with impairments don't identify themselves as disabled. DREAMSTIME/TNS



Fiber supplements could improve brain function in older adults, according to a new study. DREAMSTIME/TNS

ACTIVE AGING

Some simple ways to boost brain function as you age

Berries, chocolate, even music can help you stay sharp.

By Yolanda Harris
For the AJC

It is a common occurrence for some people to lose their keys, forget passwords and phone numbers that they have known for years, or lose their train of thought mid-sentence. It could be the result of taking on extra tasks, working through major life changes, or stress. When these issues become more prevalent, it may be a good time to speak with a health professional about next steps. However, there are several ways to increase brain function to power up your day and enjoy long-term benefits.

A report by the Alzheimer's Association cites ways to improve cognitive function, overall quality of life, and engagement.

"Non-drug treatments include physical activity, memory and orientation exercises, and music- and art-based therapies," it said.

There are also certain foods that boost mental wellness.

The power of food

The brain is an energy-intensive organ that requires healthy foods to fuel optimal function.

"Omega-3 fatty acids, for example, help build and repair brain cells, and antioxidants reduce cellular

stress and inflammation, which are linked to brain aging and neurodegenerative disorders, such as Alzheimer's disease," Medical News Today reports. Studies have shown that high levels of omega-3 also increase blood flow to the brain.

Incorporating foods like soybeans, flaxseed, nuts and seeds can help. Fish like salmon, mackerel, tuna and herring are also beneficial.

"Antioxidants are especially important for brain health, as the brain is highly susceptible to oxidative stress, which contributes to age-related cognitive decline and brain diseases," according to Medical News Today.

Chocolate lovers will appreciate this recommendation to indulge in dark chocolate. While this is not a green light to overindulge, a serving of dark chocolate a few days a week can certainly help. Like dark chocolate, blueberries, strawberries and blackberries have parallel benefits.

Avocados have been all the buzz in recent years. From putting it on toast to adding it as a side item along with eggs for breakfast, or creating richer, creamier smoothies without ruining the taste, avocados offer great benefits. They are also a great addition to salads and, according to Healthline, they can be used to replace mayonnaise in egg, tuna and chicken salads.

"Eating monounsaturated fats like avocados may also reduce high blood pressure," which could help

lower the risk of cognitive decline, Medical News Today reported.

Benefits of music

This may come as a surprise, but music makes a difference in how the brain functions. An AARP survey revealed the impact of music on cognitive and emotional well-being.

"Active musical engagement, especially among those over 50, was connected to higher rates of happiness and cognitive function," AARP reported. "Among adults ages 65 and older, engagement in music amplifies the mental well-being effects of early music exposure or makes up for a lack of initial music exposure."

According to the Harvard Health Blog, studies have shown that music activates most of the brain.

"Brain pathways – and even whole networks – are strengthened when they are used and are weakened when they are not used," cognitive and behavioral neurologist contributor Dr. Andrew E. Budson wrote of the survey on the Harvard Health Blog.

Turning on music while walking, working, cooking, or simply reading a book not only increases brain function, but it positively impacts mood.

Brain suggests uptempo music to boost energy.

So eat that dark chocolate, top oatmeal with berries, and turn up your favorite song, and move those feet.

CARING FOR A LOVED ONE

When is the right time to pursue a conservatorship?

By Andrea Clement
For the AJC

"I would do it all over again if I had to. I just wish I'd done it a lot sooner," said Cheryl Tanner of Stone Mountain, reflecting on the difficult decision she made in 2020 to pursue a conservatorship for her father, Wayne Tanner.

A family acquaintance had targeted Tanner's father and his life savings while he struggled with declining physical and mental health, including cancer, dementia and loneliness. After attempting to turn him against his family, she married the widower and promptly took over his bank accounts, even having herself appointed as the trustee of his revocable trust.

That's when Tanner felt she had no choice but to retain an attorney and petition the court for a conservatorship to manage her father's finances, even though the process seemed daunting at the time.

"My father was a good man. He wasn't exceptionally wealthy, but he did well for himself. He was a do-gooder; he took care of a lot of people. He didn't deserve what this woman was trying to do to him in his final chapter of life," she said. Tanner diligently researched ways to protect her father from losing everything. All the information she found pointed to conservatorship as the solution.

The legal fees to obtain the conservatorship cost the family about \$10,000, but they saved exponentially more than that, including the nearly \$200,000 of her father's assets required to provide adequate round-the-clock medical care for him during his final year of life. Bed-bound from dementia and advanced cancer, Tanner's father died in 2022 at 83.

What is a conservatorship?

"In Georgia, guardianship primarily concerns the well-being and personal care of an incapacitated individual or minor, including day-to-day decision-making and health care decisions," said Alex Johnson, a partner in Bernard & Johnson, LLC, law firm in Atlanta. "Conservatorship, on the other

hand, focuses on financial affairs, managing assets and handling financial decisions for someone unable to do so themselves due to incapacity or being a minor. It is common for the court to appoint the same person to act as both guardian and conservator, but it can also appoint different individuals for these roles."

In Tanner's case, her sister served as legal guardian while a third-party Gwinnett County conservator managed the financial matters. Deferring the money management to a professional greatly relieved the pressure on Tanner and her siblings, and prevented potential conflict while they were caring for their father.

"I felt safe and relieved to have a neutral third party handling the finances, which allowed us to focus on my father's care," she said.

A conservatorship or guardianship is court-supervised and is established when a person is deemed incompetent, Johnson explained. "In contrast, a power of attorney is a voluntary arrangement made while the person is still competent, offering a less intrusive and often less costly alternative. However, situations may arise where even with a power of attorney in place, a court-appointed guardianship or conservatorship becomes necessary."

How to obtain a conservatorship

According to Johnson: "Establishing either a guardianship or conservatorship in Georgia involves petitioning the probate court, notifying family members, representation of the proposed ward by an attorney, conducting a medical evaluation, and holding a hearing. The process aims to ensure the protection of the incapacitated person's rights while providing for their needs when they cannot do so themselves."

Tanner said their attorney advised conservatorship proceedings should take 60-90 days on average. However, the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant delays for the family, including a nine-month wait for a court hearing. Because her father had gotten married, the burden of proof

fell on his children to show the judge that not only was their father incapable of handling his finances, but so was his wife, who had let many of his bills lapse and remain unpaid. Their case was so compelling the judge granted the guardianship and conservatorship the day of the hearing.

When to pursue a conservatorship

A conservatorship may be necessary because of "significant mental decline from diseases like Alzheimer's, (or) inability to handle personal and financial affairs," Johnson shared.

For anyone considering a conservatorship for a loved one, Tanner and Johnson both recommend family members communicate openly and hire a reputable attorney.

"When selecting an attorney for conservatorship matters, experience in probate courts, estate law, conservatorship and guardianship law, a track record of successful representation, and an empathetic understanding of family dynamics are crucial factors to consider," Johnson said.

He added that conservators and guardians, whether a family member or third party, are expected to always "act in the ward's best interests, keep accurate records, and seek court approval for significant decisions." They should never commingle funds or make unauthorized decisions.

There are rules and reporting requirements to ensure the best interests and rights of the ward are being protected. For example, in Tanner's case, they had to report in writing each quarter regarding her father's health condition and any changes.

"It's also important to consider the long-term implications of the conservatorship, including the potential for adjustments to the arrangement as circumstances change, ensuring the arrangement continues to serve the best interest of your loved one. Sometimes, people may become more capable of managing their own lives, and their individual rights need to be reasserted, and the court system disengaged, for their dignity and freedom."

AGING IN ATLANTA

GRANDPARENTS RAISING KIDS

It takes a village, and faith, to raise grandkids

Georgia State University program helps 74-year-old and others raise their grandchildren.

By Yolanda Harris
for the AJC

As a young girl, Julia Melton was the family babysitter. She loved caring for the little girls so much she planned to have a daughter of her own. She even had a name picked out: Joy.

Three boys later, and well beyond childbearing age, Julia's dream faded. Although she said she was elated by the birth of each son, her desire for baby "Joy" stayed quietly tucked away in her heart.

Delayed but not denied

In 2010, when Julia's youngest son announced he would soon become a father, it ignited a new fire of hope within her. And when the infant arrived, Julia's prayers were answered. The moment became even sweeter when her son named the baby Janiah-Joy.

"To see my first grandchild come into the world was the most precious thing I had ever witnessed," she the 74-year-old said. "The song 'Never Knew Love Like This Before,' by Stephanie Mills, came up in my spirit, and I would sing it to her often."

"Our bond began on Day 1 when I took her home from the hospital," Julia said.

Prior to Janiah-Joy's arrival, Julia was an empty nester. Having been a single mother for many years, she had spent most of her time providing for her children. "Juggling your life after not having a child at home on a day-to-day basis for 20-plus years was an adjustment," Julia said. "I was used to treating myself to movie days on Saturdays."

That changed, however, when Julia, like many grandparents, began raising her granddaughter. The girl's parents were young and ill-prepared to care for her, so — although they remain very active in Janiah-Joy's life —

they all made the decision Julia would raise her.

From watching "Joy," as Julia affectionately calls her, take her first steps to losing her first tooth, it was an adventure. At the beginning, Julia still worked full time. Finding a reliable babysitter was a new experience, because her mother had lived with her while the boys were young. "My mother was my day care," Julia said.

When it was time for Janiah-Joy to attend kindergarten, Julia made the decision to retire. "I wanted to be there for her and take her to and from school and help her with homework," she said. "By continuing to work, I would have been spread too thin."

Maximizing support

Janiah-Joy is now 13 and shares memorable firsts with her grandmother. "I remember getting my nails polished and flying to New Jersey to visit family for the first time," the youngster said. She also stayed at a beachfront hotel in Panama City once.

However, managing middle school homework, extracurricular activities, and practically every need and want in between has become a heavy lift for Julia.

As the African proverb states: "It takes a village to raise a child. Julia found her village through a program specifically created for grandparents like her.

Project Healthy Grandparent, a program offered through Georgia State University, aims to improve the health and well-being of people who are raising their grandchildren. She attends workshops about various topics monthly and gets a chance to engage with other grandparents.

"Early childhood intervention, educational support, tutoring services and legal support are offered," PHG social worker Mary Evans said. The program serves South Fulton and South DeKalb residents.

"Nursing services, which include medical exams and checkups, are provided at home, as well as qualifying medical supplies like blood



74-year-old Julia Melton of Atlanta embraces her 13-year-old granddaughter, Janiah-Joy Melton, whom she raises full time. COURTESY

pressure monitors," Evans said. Free tickets and transportation to Atlanta Hawks games, Zoo Atlanta and other events are a bonus. "The main qualification is that the grandparent and grandchild must live in a parent-absent home," Evans said.

"The program is a lifesaver for grandparents," Julia said. "If it means helping you to keep a roof over your head or food on your table, or if your grandchild needs some form of intervention, they are there." Through Project Healthy Grandparents, Julia was able to secure med-

ical testing for Joy through Emory Healthcare. "They value the help grandparents provide," she said.

Donors also assist in providing gift cards to grocery stores. The program even helps with Christmas presents.

"You give them a list of what you want and what the grandchild wants," Julia said. "Janiah-Joy received an iPad, three pairs of sneakers — all top shelf, including Jordans." Julia also received gifts, which were delivered and fully wrapped. "Joy was fascinated that people who

didn't even know her would give her presents. It was the best Christmas ever," Julia said.

The faith walk

"This whole journey has been a faith walk," Julia said. For example, after being approved to move into a senior living property, she learned that children were not allowed. That restriction put Julia in a difficult position without any immediate available options.

"I am thankful that my mom was a woman of faith. She used to tell me things

"To see my first grandchild come into the world was the most precious thing I had ever witnessed. The song 'Never Knew Love Like This Before,' by Stephanie Mills, came up in my spirit, and I would sing it to her often. Our bond began on Day 1 when I took her home from the hospital."

Julia Melton

like 'just have faith' or 'God will provide.'" Julia said she lives by that advice.

"One day it dropped in my spirit to call a friend," she shared. As it turned out, Julia's friend knew about a property that accepted adults who were raising their grandchildren. As is the case with most income-based housing, the wait list was extensive. She was told, however, she could skip the line if she met the criteria for a specific condition, which she fortunately did. "And that's how that problem was resolved," she said.

"I've never doubted in all these 13 years that things were meant to be any other way than how they have turned out," Julia said. From her deep-seated desire to have a girl to raising her granddaughter, Julia says her joy is now fulfilled.

"I know that I couldn't have been successful in any of this without faith," Julia said.

To learn more about Project Healthy Grandparents, visit phg.lewis.gsu.edu/us.

RETIREMENT

Thinking of retiring? These U.S. cities are most affordable

U.S. News rankings are based mostly on cost of housing.

By Hunter Boyce
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Last September, the cheapest U.S. housing market offered homes at \$229,000, while the priciest market asked \$787,000. That's why retirees looking to move somewhere more affordable can rest assured there are communities that likely offer homes for less than their area — much less.

Of course, choosing an affordable place to retire is about much more than home prices. Some will choose to rent rather than buy.

There is also the matter of local income tax laws and the cost of living for a community. That's why U.S. News and World Report has ranked the best places to retire in 2024 based only on their affordability.

Here are the top four:

Youngstown, Ohio

Youngstown, Ohio, is the most affordable. Homes average \$137,546, while rentals have mean monthly costs of \$706.

Youngstown ranked ninth

overall as one of the best places to retire, making it a perfect choice for retirees living on a tight budget.

Hickory, North Carolina

Ranked second, Hickory, North Carolina, boasts a median home price of \$219,950 and an average monthly rent of \$743. It's the 36th best place to retire, overall, according to U.S. News and World Report.

Hickory is full of local artistry, including major influences from nearby Asheville.

Springfield, Missouri

Known as the "Queen City of the Ozarks," Springfield, Missouri, is the birthplace of Route 66 and offers a bevy of opportunities to enjoy fine dining, art and theater.

The town, which ranks third as one of the best places to retire on a budget, earned high praise from U.S. News and World Report for its communal residents.

"Springfield residents have a strong sense of social responsibility and don't ignore the area's problems, including homelessness and poverty," the news outlet reported. "The community's many nonprofit, volunteer and social service orga-



Youngstown, Ohio, was ranked by U.S. News & World Report as the most affordable city for retirees. ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

nizations work hard to help those in need while developing proactive long-term solutions."

Homes there cost roughly \$290,875, and renters pay about \$809 a month.

Brownsville, Texas

A cultural hub of lively activity, Brownsville, Texas, rests at the southernmost part of the state near the border — offering quick access to the Gulf of Mexico.

Retirees looking to enjoy beautiful beaches, fresh seafood and rich Mexican culture can't do much better than Brownsville — the fourth most affordable place to retire this year.

Homes there average \$276,671, while rent costs roughly \$785 a month.



The downtown city skyline and buildings of Springfield, Missouri, which earned praise for its strong sense of social responsibility. ADOBE STOCK IMAGES

AGING IN ATLANTA

GARDENING

It's time to dig in the dirt again

May is a perfect month to plant your flowers and veggies.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

Waiting for the final frost to move through Georgia before planting your spring garden is a challenge. Even with some flowers blooming while winter is still barely hanging on, May is an ideal month to kick things off in your yard.

“May is a great time for planting summertime annuals, perennials and small shrubs,” Scott Weed, founder of Artistic Outdoor Landscapes told the AJC.

Among his favorites are Begonia for annuals, Hosta for perennials, and Gardenia for shrubs. These are hearty plants that also look pretty when blooming.

For Kelly Mogelgaard, a North Fulton Master Gardener, May is one of her favorite times to plant. She calls it the “most magical time” to get a lot of natural beauty out of your garden.

“May is when you’re past any frost risk so your plants can get established before the heat of the summer,” Mogelgaard told the AJC.

Whether you’re looking to fill your garden with plants native to Georgia, or want a variety of flower plants, there’s a lot to consider when making your selection.

“Most people will pick out a plant because it’s pretty on the surface, but that’s only half the story,” Weed said.

If you purchase your plants at a local nursery, don’t forget to check out the plant’s health in addition to admiring its flowers and leaves.

“Take a second to remove the plant from its pot and check to make sure it’s properly rooted into the container and not just sitting in loose soil. Older plants might be root-bound as well, with a tangled web of roots which have the potential to choke themselves and cause an unhealthy appearance down the road,” Weed said.

If you see either of these issues, consider putting that specific plant back and moving on to other options.

Once you’re ready to plant, make sure you’re prepared to tackle another potential issue – the soil. Georgia is well-known for its red clay, and although it can be a nuisance, it’s not the end of your May planting by any stretch.

“It’s a common misconception that our native Georgia soil isn’t capable of supporting plant growth, but the majority of plants thrive in our native soil,” Weed said.

If your yard does have a lot of red clay, Weed suggests staying away from plants that need well-drained soil to thrive.

When planting in clay, you can make things easier on yourself, according to Mogelgaard, by digging a shallow hole that’s a little wider. Filling it back in with clay soil mixed with a little compost or organic material will help keep the roots healthy and enable them to



You don't have to have a backyard, in-ground garden to enjoy your plants. Planting greenery and flowering shrubs in pots on a deck can go a long way in beautifying your home. PHOTO BY REYNOLDS ROGERS/FAST COPY NEWS SERVICE.



Potted plants don't have to produce flashy flowers to be beautiful additions to your garden. JASON GETZ/JASON.GETZ@AJC.COM



You want to pick the healthiest plants with the least signs of disease. You're selecting how the fruit will look in the future, so pick the perfect fruit, which you will pick at ultimate ripeness. DREAMSTIME/TNS



Garden expert Pamela Crawford has tested thousands of plants during the past couple decades to find the easiest, most dependable bloomers for our area. She recommends “Dragon Wing” begonia, an annual that blooms from spring through fall, for shady areas. COURTESY

move through the clay barrier in the soil.

“Over time, organic amendments or organic material enhances soil texture and drainage,” Mogelgaard said.

You also need to make sure you’re planting your plants in the right spots. Make sure to look at instructions to understand water and sun requirements. You don’t want to put a plant that needs eight hours of sunshine per day in a shady spot.

It’s also a good idea to consider the weather. Avoid putting fragile plants in spots where storms could damage them.

If you’re thinking of planting a vegetable garden this year, stick to what grows best in Atlanta over the summer. According to Weed, these include favorites like tomatoes, okra, beans, peas and peppers.

Mogelgaard also finds May to be a great time to plant your herbs.

“The key to planting a ‘small’ garden of veggies is to only plant a few of these crops in one season, alternating to a different crop or two the following year,” Weed said.

Regardless of what makes your May garden bloom, remember to properly care for all new plants. They require a lot of water at first and a close eye as they establish themselves.

“Water is the most critical

aspect to combat the stress plants endure during installation,” Weed said. “Don’t assume Mother Nature will properly care for your plants.”

Weed suggests you probe the soil surrounding the plant to keep water levels just right. Overwatering can also put stress on young plants; the same happens if they’re too dry.

“In general, a plant in Atlanta needs one inch of water per week once it’s established,” Mogelgaard

said.

When all is said and done, and you’re admiring your May garden, remember, there’s no perfect recipe for thriving greenery. Don’t be afraid to move a plant that’s not looking its best, and allow yourself a pass if plants die and you have to rethink your garden.

“To be a good gardener, be observant,” Mogelgaard said. “Plant correctly, water well, and know your plant. The more you learn, the more fun gardening is.”

FUN AT 55

May activities to keep you busy

By Lesly Gregory
for the AJC

Right now is such a fun time to be in Atlanta – there’s so much to do. With multiple festivals and special activities happening every weekend in May, it’s easy to find something to fill up your Saturdays and Sundays.



INDIE CRAFT EXPERIENCE

EXPLORE THE ARTS OUT-OF-DOORS

Chastain Park Arts Festival

Featuring 175 artists and artisans from across Georgia, the region and the country, the Chastain Park Arts Festival emphasizes visual arts. You’ll meet painters, sculptors, photographers, leather and metal crafters, glass blowers, jewelers and more as you walk down Park Drive in Chastain Park. Take in an artist demonstration, participate in a hands-on activity, or visit the children’s area. Local food and beverage concessions, including gourmet food trucks, and live musical performances round out this fun weekend event.

10 a.m.-5 p.m. Saturday, May 11, and 11 a.m.- 5 p.m. Sunday, May 12. Free admission. Chastain Park, 4469 Stella Drive, Atlanta. chastainparkartsfestival.com

Indie Craft Experience Summer Market

This craft and vintage market shows off the wares of crafters, artists, makers and vintage sellers from across the country in addition to promoting local vendors. Coupled with food, music and the promise of a free tote to the first 100 attendees, this is a shopping experience that allows you to find some unique pieces while supporting independent creatives.

11 a.m.-5 p.m. Sunday, May 19. \$5 entry fee. Kids under 12 are free. Monday Night Brewing Garage-West End, 933 Lee St. SW, Atlanta. indiecraftexperience.com/about-may-19

MAKE IT A DATE

Atlanta Beltline Lantern Parade

Bring your own lantern or simply enjoy the lights as you walk along the Beltline for the Lantern Parade. Hundreds of lighted lanterns celebrate the community and show off local creativity. Live bands make the parade a true experience whether you’re participating in the parade or a spectator on the sidelines.

7:45-10 p.m. Saturday, May 11. Free admission. Atlanta Beltline Westside Trail, Lena Street South to University Avenue. art.beltline.org/events/lantern-parade



Alpharetta Brew Moon Fest

6-10:30 p.m. Saturday, June 1. \$10 for a single ticket. Table for six is \$180, and table for eight is \$240. Downtown Alpharetta, Milton Ave., Alpharetta. alpharettabusinessassociation.com/event-5547730

Combining adult beverages with rocking live music, the Alpharetta Brew Moon Fest is known for being a fun street party. Sample beer from local breweries as you check out the crowd along Milton Avenue or sit and enjoy the evening with someone special. You can purchase a table and invite a few friends or bring your own chairs to set up for the night.

TRY SOMETHING OUT OF THE ORDINARY

MomoCon

Have grandchildren who love anime and comics? Give them a special treat by making a date for MomoCon. This convention caters to lovers of anime, animation, comics, video games and more. A huge exhibit hall and opportunities to meet celebrity guests make this a special event for fans of any age.

Friday, May 24-Monday, May 27. Ticket prices begin at \$50 for a 1-day pass. Kids 9 and under are free. Georgia World Congress Center, 285 Andrew Young International Blvd NW, Atlanta. momocon.com



Bark Meow-Ket

Teaming up with the Atlanta Humane Society and Uptown Atlanta, this combination artists market and pet event brings local artisans together with pet-product vendors. Food will be available for humans and their furry friends as well. Get their early if you can; the first 50 humans get a free tennis ball to enjoy with their pup.

11 a.m.-4 p.m. Saturday, June 1. Free admission. The Lawn at Uptown Atlanta, 500 Lindburgh Dr. NE, Atlanta. indiecraftexperience.com/about-bark-meowket-june-1

GRANDMA'S A WINNER

Woman, 58, sets record for holding plank

Perseverance in sport key for retired school principal.

By Avery Newmark
avery.newmark@ajc.com

DonnaJean Wilde, a 58-year-old grandmother of 12 from Alberta, Canada, has broken the world record for the longest time in an abdominal plank position (female) by holding a plank for an astonishing 4 hours, 30 minutes and 11 seconds, as announced by Guinness World Records.

According to People, Wilde’s planking journey began more than a decade ago when she broke her wrist and discovered that plank-

ing was an exercise she could perform in her daily routine, even with a cast on. “I realized that I could read and do things when I was planking and fell in love with it,” she told Guinness World Records. Wilde also completed all her master’s degree studies while planking.

Wilde reportedly held a plank for six hours every day to prepare for the record-breaking attempt, split into two three-hour blocks.

During the event, which took place at the high school where she formerly served as vice principal before retiring, she was surrounded by her large family and former students who came to watch and support her.

Wilde told Guinness that during the last 30 minutes, she focused on “breathing, staying calm, and not shaking.”

Despite suffering from chronic pain in her hands and arms, Wilde persevered through the challenge.

Her husband, Randy, believes her condition has proved to be helpful, telling Guinness World Records that the “chronic pain and numbness that she deals with every day has helped her to be able to plank through the pain.”

Wilde’s achievement is not only a testament to her physical strength and endurance but also to her unwavering determination and passion for the exercise. She advises

anyone aspiring to break her record: “Keep trying and keep practicing. When you have to read or work on your computer, just get on the floor and do it on the floor.”

Planking may not be the most exciting exercise, but it offers numerous health benefits, particularly for aging adults. Research shows that regular planking can improve strength and endurance, alleviate lower back pain and help prevent falls, all of which are crucial for maintaining mobility and independence as we age. So, the next time you’re looking for a quick and effective way to boost your overall health and well-being, consider adding planking to your fitness routine.