

AGING IN ATLANTA

PRESENTED BY



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

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS
WENONA BELTON



“After passing the bar exam, I had no intention of practicing. I was encouraged to pursue an opportunity to serve as a staff attorney in juvenile court. You could say that juvenile law chose me!” said Judge Wenona Belton, who advocates for at-risk children. CHRIS HUNT FOR THE AJC

Judge strives to preserve families

Belton is actively innovating juvenile court system

By Andrea Clement
For The AJC

Each month, as part of our Aging in Atlanta series, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution introduces readers to a member of the city's thriving 55+ community. This month, we profile Judge Wenona Clark Belton of Atlanta.

Raised in suburban Washington, D.C., Judge Belton relocated to Atlanta 30 years ago. After working in fashion merchandising and attending paralegal school, Belton enrolled in law school twenty years after getting her undergraduate degree. Today, Belton serves as a judge for the juvenile court system in Fulton County and as a board member of the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges (NCJFCJ). Additionally, Belton is a cabinet member for Get Georgia Reading, where she aims to improve children's futures by promoting reading proficiency.

Q: Can you share a bit about your career path to becoming a juvenile court judge?
A: I never anticipated that I would be a judge, much less an attorney. If someone had suggested that would be my life today, I would have laughed at them.

After passing the bar exam, I had no intention of practicing law. I was encouraged to pursue an opportunity to serve as a staff attorney in juvenile court – you could say that juvenile law chose me! Juvenile court was a great fit for me as a former foster parent and CASA volunteer (Court Appointed Special Advocate). The goal is to preserve families, (and) protect children and the public.

I have not engaged in this work alone. I have been supported and mentored by many wonderful friends, family, attorneys and colleagues.

Q: What motivates you each day?
A: In my chambers, I have a photograph of the sim-

Belton continued on S3

VETERANS DAY Q&A

Their story of service

Local veterans open up about their commitment to serve

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For The AJC

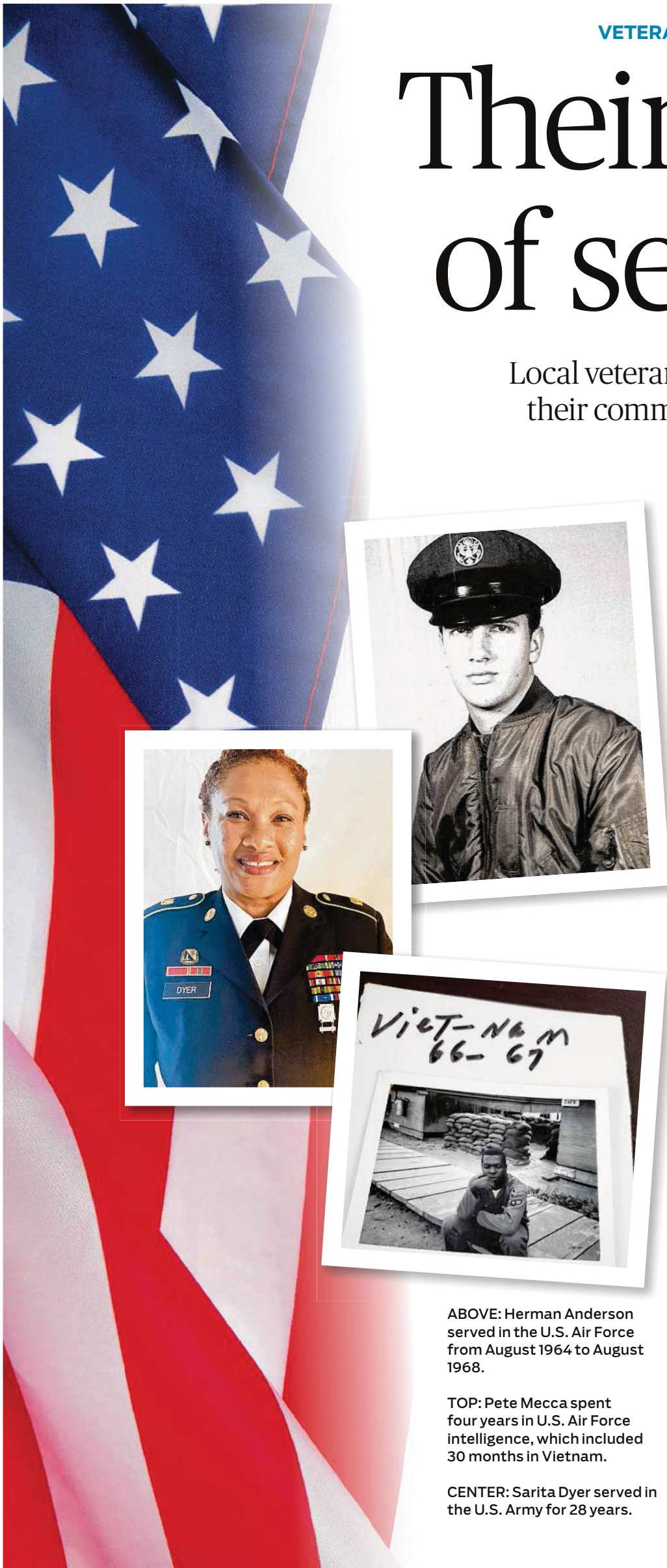
In honor of Veterans Day, The Atlanta Journal-Constitution is recognizing five local veterans. These former servicemen and servicewomen share their memories and the ways in which they would like to see that lifelong commitment be honored.

Sarita Dyer, 55, McDonough
Army, 28 years of service.
Ranks: Sergeant Major – E-9; Sergeant Major, force protection during Operation Iraqi Freedom, Operation New Dawn and Operation Enduring Freedom; Female Engagement Team officer in charge during Operation Enduring Freedom Aug. 2012 to Feb. 2013 – Afghanistan; Army Congressional Fellow (military advisor for Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand of New York); legislative liaison for Secretary of the Army – 2015-2016; first sergeant, 29th Support Group, Kaiserslautern Germany – 2006 to 2008; senior drill sergeant for initial entry training, Fort Leonard Wood, Missouri – 2001-2004.

Q: Were you deployed during a conflict?
A: Operation Desert Storm – 1991; Implementation Force (IFOR), Bosnia-Herzegovina – 1995-1996; Operation Iraqi Freedom; Operation New Dawn; Operation Enduring Freedom.

Q: What are some memories that stand out to you about your service?
A: During September 2001, I was a drill sergeant preparing to graduate a class of initial entry trainees when the (Sept. 11) attack happened. Later, I went on to train over 3,000 trainees with

Veterans continued on S2



ABOVE: Herman Anderson served in the U.S. Air Force from August 1964 to August 1968.

TOP: Pete Mecca spent four years in U.S. Air Force intelligence, which included 30 months in Vietnam.

CENTER: Sarita Dyer served in the U.S. Army for 28 years.

VETERAN SERVICES

Local groups keep veterans active, connected

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For The AJC

Whether they found themselves drafted during a conflict and spent a few years in service or they invested a career in the military, veterans often seem to open up about certain parts of their lives more easily in the company of others who have served.

“Veterans have a common bond, and a lot of times, it’s easier to talk with a veteran than just anybody,” Cobb Senior Services veteran outreach program leader Mike Nichols said.

Along with Veteran Connection, a Cobb Senior Services program, Atlanta’s former ser-

vice members have a variety of outlets for honoring and visiting with each other, and they may get to take a trip while they’re at it. Here are a few options.

COBB COUNTY Veteran Connection

Veteran Connection offers several activities that give veterans room to get to know one another, and there’s also assistance through sharing information from other organizations. Being around others who have served can be a way to sift through memories from decades ago in a way other ser-

Services continued on S2



Veterans gather at the National Infantry Museum & Soldier Center in Columbus during a field trip with Cobb Senior Services Veteran Connection. CONTRIBUTED

LIVE WELL. YOU'VE EARNED IT.
WE SALUTE YOU

Science indicates Olive Leaf Extract successfully:

- Lowers high blood pressure
- Reverses diabetes
- Improves cholesterol levels



Visit MyOliveLeaf.biz to learn more and take 15% off your order of Olive Leaf Extract tinctures with code AJC15

Disclaimer: These statements have not been evaluated by the Food and Drug Administration. This product is not intended to diagnose, treat, cure, or prevent any disease. Offer ends 12/30/22.

AGING IN ATLANTA

Veterans

continued from S1

three years as a drill sergeant. (I also recall) serving as a Congressional Fellow for U.S. Sen. Gillibrand where I had the opportunity to see “how the sausage is made.” I was afforded the opportunity to walk an amendment to the floor of the U.S. Capitol. (Another thing I’m proud of is) achieving the rank of sergeant major – only 1% of the Army achieve the rank of sergeant major.

Q: How do your family and friends honor your service, and/or how do you yourself acknowledge your service?

A: My family honors my service by continuing to serve. I am currently running for Henry County Commissioner for District 3. My family helps on the campaign. My daughter is a fire firefighter in Dekalb, my son is an infantry officer in the Army, and my husband is my biggest supporter, both mentally and spiritually.

Q: What would you like your community to know about how to acknowledge veterans or anniversaries of key events in major conflicts?

A: To acknowledge female veterans and their contribution to the freedoms of America. I would like to start by providing ... a new Veterans Affairs Motto. The old one read “To care for him who shall have borne the battle and his widow and his orphan.” I want to make the word “his” gender neutral to make us feel inclusive. (I’d also like to) make Women Veterans Day a federal recognition, not just state by state.

Herman Anderson, 77, East Cobb County
Air Force for four years:



Diane Sherman served in the U.S. Army from December 1975 to February 1991.

August 1964 to August 1968.
Rank: Sergeant

Q: Were you deployed during a conflict?

A: I was deployed to Vietnam during the Vietnam Conflict for one year: June 1966 to June 1967.

Q: How do family and friends honor your service, and/or how do you yourself acknowledge your service?

A: The Vietnam Conflict was not a popular war. Therefore, Vietnam-era veterans are just now – at this time – getting their recognition. My family is very proud of my service. They talk about it more than I do.

Q: What would you like your community to know about how to acknowledge veterans or anniversaries of key events in major conflicts?

A: I would like the community to understand veterans and their families paid a price for our free-

dom. Freedom is not free. Therefore, the celebration and observance of our military recognition days are good to educate and inform.

Pete Mecca, 75, St. Augustine, Florida
Air Force intelligence for four years, including 30 months in Vietnam.
Rank: Sergeant

Q: Were you deployed during a conflict?

A: (During the Vietnam War, I was in) Nakhon Phanom for 18 months interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail in Laos. Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon, Vietnam, for 12 months with a recon outfit.

Q: What are some memories that stand out to you from your service?

A: (I remember being) 29 years old flying on B-52 bombers out of McCoy Air Force Base in Orlando, Florida, and plotting nuclear missions, then spending 30



Percy Molette served 21 years in the U.S. Marine Corps after serving four years in the U.S. Air Force.

months in Vietnam interdicting the Ho Chi Minh Trail (The Blood Road) in a war nobody claimed was raging, plus plotting the recon missions for the Cambodian Invasion... I don't think we can cover all my memories, some of which I will not discuss.

Q: How do family and friends honor your service, and/or how do you yourself acknowledge your service?

A: My parents are gone. Dad was a WWII combat veteran. Mom worked at a defense plant. They were proud of my service, but Vietnam vets weren't treated well when we came home. We've seen our legacy morph from being “baby killers” to “heroes.” We were neither. We were just another generation who answered their call to duty and did the best we could under impossible rules of engagement. I make (veteran-focused) presentations all over Georgia, write a newspaper article called “A Veteran's Story,” have a radio Zoom show out of Pittsburg, have served as commander of the Atlanta World War II Roundtable, am a member of the Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association, Veterans of Foreign Wars, The American Legion, and a few more organizations. I have two

books published and am working on three more.

Percy Molette, 75, DeKalb County

Four years in the Air Force; 21 years in Marine Corps.

Rank: Airman First Class; Master Sergeant – E-8

Q: Were you deployed during a conflict?

A: I spent a year in Vietnam, (and I) flew a lot of combat flights... I was married then, so I was worried more about my wife while I was gone.

Q: What are some memories that stand out to you about your service?

A: The biggest thing about the Marine Corps was I needed a lot of discipline because I took everything as being something, but not that big a deal. The Marine Corps was hard – in order to get the work that you're doing, you have to, sort of, take everything seriously... I was crazy about it. It was good for me. It was a lot of discipline... I met my wife (the late Myrna Molette) when I was in London (in the Air Force). She was from Barbados... I was (in London) for about three years. And then, when I got ready to leave, I'd been seeing her for the whole time that I was over there, and she was just as sweet as she wanted to be, and I asked her would she marry me, and she said she would.

Diane Sherman, 66, Marietta

Army from December 1975 to February 1991

Rank: Sergeant First Class – E-7

Q: What are some memories that stand out to you about your service?

A: I am a performer... I

did well as far as my ranks and my service and accelerating so that always made me pretty happy... I met my husband (Jerald Sherman) in the military. He is a retired E-9, Sergeant Major – he served 27 years. My first overseas assignment was in Panama, and that's where we met in '78... I was able to get up to my master's degree while I was still on active duty; we traveled extensively in Europe and South America... I don't think I would've ever experienced, culturally, all the different countries and cultures had I not joined the military... It really set my compass in life, and I wouldn't trade it for the world.

Q: How do family and friends honor your service, and/or how do you yourself acknowledge your service?

A: Among my colleagues with (the metro Atlanta-based networking group Georgia Military Women), we are very supportive of one another... (It's) just trusting that they would have my back and that I would have theirs when it comes to recommendations or social events or supporting one another.

Q: What would you like your community to know about how to acknowledge veterans or anniversaries of key events in major conflicts?

A: It's much deeper than “thank you for your service,” even though I think it's a kind, respectful thing to say. There are people who may be curious, but not all veterans want to talk about what our military service was... I think the community needs to be respectful that if somebody doesn't want to talk about something, that it's not personal. It could be an emotional protective factor.

Services

continued from S1

vice members understand, Nichols said.

“Veteran Connection was created to provide a setting where veterans could come together in a personal type of meeting or setting where they can develop connections that promote well-being and where they process experiences with people who have similar life experiences. Our main mission is just to recognize, honor, inform and assist veterans,” he said.

Connection hosts six meetings each month – one of which women veterans host – at different locations. Nichols said group sees between 60 and 80 veterans monthly – a different group at each event.

Program participants have the opportunity to take field trips on a county charter bus to places such as the National Infantry Museum & Soldier Center in Columbus and the Museum of Aviation at Robins Air Force Base. In recent years, Connection has also participated in community-wide events honoring Vietnam and Korean War veterans and women veterans, Nichols said. A key effort the organization is supporting this year is Operation Greenlight, a National Association of Counties initiative in which businesses in Cobb County will light their buildings in green beginning Nov. 7.

Nichols said Cobb is home to 42,191 veterans. According to Nichols, approximately 25,740 of them are over age 65. The four-person Veteran Connection team does what it can to keep them informed.

“We do a lot to make sure we can pass along as much information as possible from Veterans Affairs, the Georgia Department of Veterans Services and from different organiza-



Veterans attend an Atlanta World War II Roundtable event. CONTRIBUTED

tions,” Nichols said. Other communities are taking note of Cobb's efforts.

“Veteran Connection has kind of set an example,” he said. “We've had people from different counties call and ask, ‘What is Cobb doing?’”

Nichols, who is an Army veteran himself, seems honored to serve this population and raise awareness about it.

“It's important, and there are so many of these people – it's been an honor to get to know them. They've done some extraordinary things in their lives,” he said. “People really need to know what a veteran is.” cobbcounty.org/senior-services/events/veteran-connection

ATLANTA
Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association

The Atlanta Vietnam Veterans Business Association began in 1981 as those who served in the conflict returned home and began putting the next chapter of their lives together,

according to Carl “Skip” Bell, 77, the organization's current president.

“There were people in Atlanta – businesspeople who had come back from Vietnam, done their thing in the Army, and they got out and started making their own lives again – their own careers. And they were successful businesspeople – realtors, lawyers, bankers – but your average Vietnam vet, according to media and movies and all that, was some kind of a strung-out dude,” Bell said.

“We wanted people to know that we had done something else with our lives after we got back and that we weren't these broken people. That was really why the organization started ... to change the public image of the Vietnam veteran. We were all proud that we served, and still are, but we wanted to show that we could be successful, too.”

The West Cobb resident, now retired from an information systems career, was on active duty with the Army for 14 years and spent 17 years with the Army Reserve. Now, he joins the AVVBA for its

once-a-month lunch meetings, which feature speakers such as a representative from the Georgia Department of Veterans Service.

The AVVBA also has a hand in honoring locals who died while serving. Over the past 40 years, Bell said members have recognized Atlantans killed in action with 26 memorials at places such as Peachtree Center, CNN Center, Georgia World Congress Center and the University of North Georgia.

“We have memorialized those people, gotten their families involved, put a bronze plaque up,” Bell said. “We have tried to make sure that people remembered that people gave the ultimate sacrifice at the behest of our country helping another country.”

There's also now an AVVBA scholarship fund for Iraq and Afghanistan veterans looking to further their educations. The association also partners with the Atlanta History Center for its oral history program and its Veterans Day celebration.

For organizations look-

ing for talks about the Vietnam War, the AVVBA has a speakers bureau, which Bell said supplies visitors for school classes. The association has published two books – collections of stories from members about their war experiences, and members march every year in the Georgia Veterans Day Parade in downtown Atlanta. Members have also participated in trips to Camp Toccoa at Currahee and to Washington D.C. to see the Vietnam Veterans Memorial.

Would-be participants just need to be Vietnam veterans to join the association, which for Bell seems to have been a comforting experience.

“The first time I walked into one of the AVVBA meetings, I felt like I was home because we all had that common denominator of having served in Vietnam or on the ocean outside of Vietnam.” avvba.org

DUNWOODY
Atlanta World War II Roundtable

The Atlanta World War II Roundtable, now in its 35th year, hosts regular lunch meetings that center on WWII veterans, along with speakers with associated with that era.

Communications representative Bill LeCount said the group meets 10 times each year, and attendance is open to the general public. The varied backgrounds of the attendees and speakers sometimes lead to surreal connections.

LeCount recalled a visit from one speaker – a concentration camp survivor – who was seated during a portion of the meeting next to a WWII veteran who discovered Dachau, the Nazi government's first regular concentration camp.

“They had never met before so just watching the two of them interact –

it was something to see,” LeCount said. “There's always some connection (with the speakers) to WWII. It does get harder and harder because WWII vets are passing away at about 600 a day.”

There's always a designated time for questions for the speaker, which LeCount said can stretch out depending on the direction of the conversation.

The Roundtable maintains ongoing relationships with other like-minded groups, sometimes helping with finances for area veterans associations lunches, LeCount said. The organization also has ties to WWII Heritage Days, which takes place at the Atlanta Regional Airport each year, and an annual gathering of WWII-era planes at Dekalb-Peachtree Airport.

The Roundtable also contributes to education-based charitable efforts. When it can support its community and simultaneously provide a benefit to its members, it's likely to move on the opportunity. Such was the case when a couple of high schoolers needed help collecting funds for a Pearl Harbor trip.

“I heard of a couple of kids in one of the local high schools that, as part of their junior ROTC, they were going to Pearl Harbor – they were raising money,” LeCount said. “So, I went to the board and said, ‘Hey, this is a great chance. This is what we're all about. How about we chip in and help get one of these kids over there? So, we didn't pay for their trip, but we made a hefty donation to help get them there with the agreement they would come back and show us pictures and tell us all about it, which they did. And so, it was a win-win situation. We got a free speech, and they got some help getting over there.”

atlantawwiiroundtable.org

AGING IN ATLANTA

ASK THE EXPERT DR. TRACY BLAND-DUBOSE

Screening, HPV vaccine essential for cervical cancer

Sponsored by Kaiser Permanente

Though strides have been made in the fight against cervical cancer – historically one of the most common causes of cancer death for American women – extensive screening and the administration of the human papilloma virus vaccine are crucial.

The clinical use of the Pap test beginning in the 1950s led to a dramatic decrease in cervical cancer. More recently, the implementation of the human papilloma virus (HPV) vaccine in 2006, which is now available for men and women up to the age of 45, has also helped to further decrease the burden of cervical cancer in the future and should be encouraged to all who are eligible to receive it.

These mitigation efforts are especially important for certain populations at a higher risk. These include those from lower socioeconomic status, the non-Hispanic Black population and seniors.

Currently, the U.S. Preventive Task Force and Awareness Society for Colposcopy and Cervical Pathology do not recommend routine cervical cancer screening after age 65 if the patient’s previous screening tests – taken within the last 10 years – are negative. However, more research may be warranted to determine whether screening should continue not only for non-Hispanic Black women over age 65, but possibly for all women.

We know that most of our patients do not come



ABOUT OUR EXPERT
Dr. Tracy Bland-DuBose is Area Chief of the OB/GYN Department at Kaiser Permanente of Georgia.

in for a Pap smear after 65 because of current guidelines. However, this only applies to our patients that have had multiple adequate negative screening tests in the last decade leading up to the 65th year of life. This would ideally mean two or three negative Pap smears with or without HPV co-testing from ages 55-65. Diligence is needed to ensure patients have been properly screened within the last 10 years before screening is discontinued.

This is an especially important consideration among non-Hispanic Black seniors. Some studies have shown a notable increased risk in cervical cancer for women within this group. Just as we changed the guidelines for colon cancer screening for African Americans within the past few years, this may be something to consider for cervical cancer screening guidelines.

Patients who did not qualify to receive the vaccine in their preteens are at obvious risk due to

lack of protection from high-risk HPV subtypes granted by vaccination. There are recent studies that show an increasing prevalence of cervical cancer in this age group of women who continue to be sexually active with a population of men that were also not privileged to this vaccine. Also, this age group may have comorbidities which may limit treatment options.

Poverty, a huge predictor of poor health, includes those of all ages and races and is a significant factor. Those who are uninsured are at a higher risk of cervical cancer due to less stringent or even a complete lack of screening and access to overall healthcare. A 2017 PLOS One survey found that young white women who live in certain southern states are more likely to die from cervical cancer than their counterparts in other regions where there is more access to health care. Ensuring that all have access to adequate health care is another crucial step in eliminating cervical cancer.

It is important to note during January – Cervical Health Awareness Month – that screening is already a prevention success story. Extensive screening and the HPV vaccine are vital steps in continuing to expunge the disease.

If you or your pre-teens/teens are eligible and have not received the HPV vaccine, talk to your doctor about its benefits, including preventing cervical cancer. Alongside the HPV vaccine, receiving regular Pap tests is vital to mitigating the risk for cervical cancer for all.

Belton

continued from S1

ple clapboard house that my paternal grandfather built on his farm in southern Virginia more than 100 years ago. It keeps me grounded. The memories of how my grandparents and parents worked and sacrificed so that I can serve are my greatest motivations.

Q: What is the most rewarding aspect of your career as a judge?

A: Serving as a board member of the NCJFCJ and being actively involved in the ongoing transformation and evolving innovation in child welfare and juvenile justice. We apply data and science to decrease court contact and improve outcomes for children, families, and communities.

Q: What is the most



Regarding how she unwinds from her demanding career: “I love, love, love the serenity of the North Georgia Mountains and the beauty of the Golden Isles.” CHRIS HUNT FOR THE AJC

challenging aspect of your role?

Taking myself out of my frame of reference of my upbringing, not relying on first impressions, and acknowledging secondary or vicarious trauma exists. I see children and families impacted by trauma every day. The network of NCJFCJ council-involved judges nationwide who are also engaged in this work

helps tremendously.

Q: How do you relax and decompress from your demanding career?

I love, love, love the serenity of the North Georgia Mountains and the beauty of the Golden Isles. Closer to home, I do yoga and love playing with my 10-pound chihuahua mix dog and taking advantage of my local YMCA.

NEVER A FEE FOR OUR SERVICES!

LOOK! MEDICARE HAS RULES

MOVING? RETIRING? TURNING 65?

MEDICAID? STATUS CHANGE? NURSING HOME ADMITTANCE? ...and the list goes on!

Do YOU qualify for a special enrollment Period?

Is your current Medicare plan still the best choice for you NOW? Confused about those TV commercials about Medicare plans? Call us ~ 770-373-7541

770-373-7541

There is never a fee for services. The Bonnie Dobbs Agency is an independent agency not affiliated with the United States government, any state government, or the federal Medicare program.

bonniedobbsagency
medicare and other red tape

Senior care shouldn't leave you guessing... neither should the cost.

The all-inclusive cost of any Delmar Gardens independent, assisted living, or memory care community is crystal clear. One monthly check gives you the care, services, amenities, and accommodations you deserve.

No tiered costs for levels of care, no buy-in, no community fees, no non-refundable fees... no guessing.

Save up to \$500 a month!

Delmar Gardens of Gwinnett
877-661-1795

Delmar Gardens of Smyrna
855-701-1971

SPECIAL RATES AVAILABLE NOW!
Contact us to find out more.
info20@delmargardens.com
DelmarGardens.com



AGING IN ATLANTA

PARKS AND LAND

Around Bill Jones, expect ‘something good’

Trust’s goal is to preserve dwindling native habitats.

By Mark Woolsey
Reporter Newspapers
for The AJC

It’s a pleasant mid-September Saturday morning and for Bill Jones, something good is happening. The founder and executive director of the Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land is sitting on a park bench amid the Campbellton Creek Nature Park, an 80-acre oasis of towering hardwoods, riotous greenery and garden plants. Laced with nature trails, it’s in a hyper-developed area of the city of South Fulton that’s full of warehouses and apartment complexes.

Jones is working with students from a Kennesaw State University interdisciplinary science class focused specifically on the park. They’re taking photos of a demonstration garden while checking out mushrooms and various tree varieties. They’re also digging up soil samples to be tested back on campus.

A group of cyclists pulls up, the back of their car carrying a clutch of sturdy trail bikes. Joggers and walkers cruise by. A new nearby bouldering course is drawing attention.

And Jones is basking in it all.

“We’re talking about the intersection of conservation, recreation and community,” he said of his morning chat with the college students and their professors. That “something good is happening,” is Jones’ mantra. You’ll hear it a fair number of times when you’re in his orbit.

Talk with him about what the trust is doing, and you quickly realize that in the span of a decade, he’s become an expert in all three of the disciplines he mentions. The Southeastern Trust itself has reached the same milestone, 10 years of age, which offers the chance for the group to take a bow for its work balancing conservation and recreation, while retaining ownership of the tracts it acquires.



MEET OUR PARTNER
Today’s story comes from our partner, Reporter Newspapers. Reporter Newspapers publishes free, community newspapers in Brookhaven, Buckhead, Dunwoody, and Sandy Springs. Visit them online at ReporterNewspapers.com or on Instagram @Reporter_News.

If you have any feedback or questions about our partnerships, you can contact Senior Manager of Partnerships Nicole Williams via email at nicole.williams@ajc.com.

Back in 2012, Jones, a small business owner who grew up in metro Atlanta, was attempting to chart a course bringing balance in the rest of his life.

“I went through a period of introspection, and I decided to do something to create parks,” he said. “I didn’t know how it was going to manifest itself.”

He was inspired by his frequent rambles with his dogs through the Chattahoochee National Recreation Area and the realization that since boyhood, he’d always been close to walkable trails in nature. And he believes to his core that being outdoors enhances physical, mental and what he calls “relationship” health.

As he began to plan, an associate steered him toward banks that had been saddled with foreclosed-on tracts of land courtesy of Great Recession and the real estate bust. Jones found some banks receptive to his pitch to take those vacant tracts off their hands.

“We were solving their problems for them,” is how he puts it, saying he learned to ask the bankers to throw in extra cash for such things as property taxes and environmental studies.

For several years, the trust and Jones, its only employee, focused chiefly on land acquisition. Then, with dozens of volun-



Bill Jones, founder and executive director of Southeastern Trust for Parks and Land, relaxes at Hawk Hollow. COURTESY

teer helpers Jones had recruited, the emphasis changed to creating parks where they were suitable. The first big push was to build the 210-acre Talking Rock Nature Park in Pickens County, first ensuring it was off-limits to development forever, then sketching out a network of hiking and mountain biking trails.

That’s when Ken Nix connected with Jones.

“Bill had a community meeting in Jasper about the park,” Nix recalls. “I introduced myself to him,” telling them he could build mountain biking trails for less than half of what the other group was charging.

“We’ve been friends ever since,” Nix said. “He trusts what I say, and I trust what he says.”

That ability to size people up has stood Jones in good stead, said Jessica Rossi, the acting president of the Friends of Fightingtown Creek Nature Park, a 190-acre mountainous tract near Blue Ridge the group acquired in 2016 and which is now being developed.

“I have found Bill to

be very supportive and a connector,” said Rossi, a communications executive. “I have seen when he meets someone, he looks for their strengths to figure out how they can best work together to accomplish goals.” That, she said, has progressed into successful partnerships Jones has formed with volunteers, contractors, government officials and the community at large.

She and others laud Jones’ passion and his enthusiasm, which seems unquenchable. His words bubble up and cascade like the waters in a nearby brook.

His debuting of a new nature park counts among the best of times, but there’s also the not-so-good stuff: a landowner who recently cut down an acre of trees on one of the trust’s properties; those who periodically dump a load of garbage on the group’s land, then speed off.

The job is complex and challenging, the environmentalist says, ranging from fundraising to wooing donors to managing volunteers, three to five

stalwarts per park who do the usual heavy lifting of trail maintenance and mitigating erosion.

Nix has worked to build mountain biking trails for the trust and says he doesn’t build walking corridors “that go straight up a mountain,” but instead aims at creating gentler contours that seniors and people who are out-of-shape can handle.

As director of the trust, Jones oversees nine active parks and 36 pieces of land the trust owns across Georgia, in Tennessee and in North Carolina. Some, like coast wetlands or a rocky, bear-infested region adjacent to Dollywood in Tennessee will probably never be parks. Others are getting planning and some preparatory work.

The trust’s donor base has changed over the last few years he said, with banks no longer needing to unload foreclosed properties. Individual donors have stepped in with batches of land smaller than those that emerged from the financial wreckage.

“People are approaching an age, and they think ‘I am at an age where I’m thinking about my legacy, and (land donations) is a good way to do (something good),’” he said.

As it reaches the end of its first decade, he said, the trust is seeing some notable forward momentum. Paid staff has increased from one to three. Fundraising is getting up a head of steam. An endowment fund is growing.

And he’s seen other signs things are changing, too. Early on, some city and county officials were skeptical when Jones talked up plans for land donations, evidently hesitant about kids hanging out on the property, the cost of developing it, and whether they had the resources to maintain it.

“Now, cities and counties are coming to us,” he says. “And nowadays, when we get pieces of land, every one of them is from people who have seen what they’ve accomplished and tell us to do our thing on their land.”

The trust has created outdoor classrooms, bird-

watching, and geo-caching areas. They’re planting 150,000 longleaf pine seedlings in two regions of the state. In conserving Georgia’s dwindling available land, they work on erosion and stormwater control.

Jones credits his wife of 26 years, Evelyn, for keeping him moving, helping him celebrate victories, and cheerleading him through tough times. He also draws strength and stimulation from disc golf and singing and playing his guitar. But conserving Georgia’s dwindling native habitat remains the overarching goal of his life.

And he maintains an unshakable belief in the healing power of nature.

“I got a letter from a woman in Jasper a couple of years ago,” says Jones. She picked up her sulking high-school-age daughter one day and thought perhaps a Talking Rock nature walk – she’d never been there – might produce a brighter mood.

Mom and daughter started down the trail. The daughter became intrigued by a generous array of mushrooms. She took pictures and took them to her science teacher the next day, sparking a lively classroom discussion.

“The (much happier) daughter gets picked up the next day at school and asks her mother if they can go back to the park. The mom’s like, ‘heck yeah,’” Jones said.

Two months later, their mother-and-daughter walks have improved their relationship. Both have toned up and shed weight.

“And the daughter was saying she wanted to major in botany,” he said.

Although for Jones, when he was younger, the prospect of studying the physiology, genetics and structures of plants didn’t quite measure up the simple joys of the great outdoors. “When I was in college at UGA, I got a D in botany because I got cut cutting class to go canoeing. True story,” he said.

To get specialized news and articles about aging in place, health information and more, sign up for our Aging in Atlanta newsletter.

VOLUNTEERING

Plenty of opportunities for those 50 and older to volunteer

By Rose Kennedy
For The AJC

Whether it’s a desire to give back, to feel more connected to your community or just to get out of the house, volunteering can do a world of good. Opportunities for 50 and older range from one-time gigs to consistent shifts throughout the year. Look no further than these Atlanta-area nonprofits that are eager to put volunteers to work.

Mental Health Helpline volunteer, NAMI Georgia
In addition to dozens of other opportunities, the Georgia Chapter of the National Alliance for the Mentally Ill operates a helpline and resource referral as the first line of response for those who need help due to the effects of a mental health condition.

People reach out by phone, chat and email, and helpline specialists provide a listening ear, next steps and information about potential services.

NAMI Georgia particularly seeks people who have an interest in mental health advocacy and are living with related conditions or providing care and support to affected



Meals On Wheels Atlanta volunteers delivers meals and pantry supplies in Fulton County. COURTESY

loved ones.

The positions are remote with the nonprofit’s cloud-based communication platform. Applicants must have access to a computer and high-speed internet and complete a rigorous three-week onboarding.

Access the NAMI Georgia volunteer application at namiga.org/get-involved/volunteer.

Booth Western Art Museum
This Cartersville Smithsonian Institute-affiliated museum is touted as the largest permanent exhibition space of Western art in the world. Volunteers usually work two- or three-hour shifts. Duties can involve greeting guests,

aiding with research library projects and assisting with museum events such as the annual Cowboy Festival.

Volunteers are selected on criteria including a commitment to working an average of four hours monthly and must pass a background check. Apply at volgistics.com/appform/1195973284.

Wild Nest Bird Rehab
This rescue serves metro Atlanta and rehabilitates sick and injured songbirds. It needs volunteers for public awareness, data entry, fundraising and bird care.

Those interested in directly working with rehabilitating songbirds must attend several train-



Volunteers at the Booth Museum in Cartersville usually work two- or three-hour shifts. Duties can involve greeting guests, aiding with research library projects and assisting with museum events. COURTESY OF THE BOOTH MUSEUM OF WESTERN ART

ing sessions and commit to regular shifts for at least six months.

Find a volunteer application at wildnestbirdrehab.org/volunteer.

Fulton County library volunteer
While the spots fill up quickly, new projects are always on the horizon for volunteers to help with shelving, clerical tasks or lending subject-matter expertise for a program.

Learn more about opportunities and start an application for the waiting list at fulcolibrary.org/volunteer-at-fulcolibrary.

North Georgia Knitting Guild
The North Georgia Knitting Guild links volunteers to many local char-

itable knitting projects. They include making hats for patients on chemotherapy treatment, blankets needed for animal rescues, and purple hats delivered to Children’s Healthcare of Atlanta.

The guild makes project kits available at their monthly meetings and also provides a pattern list and other instructions for knitters who prefer to work independently and give their creations to the guild for distribution.

Get more information about community knitting projects, guild meetings and apply for membership at northgeorgiaknittingguild.org/charity.

Meals On Wheels Atlanta delivery
The local Meals On

Wheels delivers meals and pantry supplies to vulnerable, underserved older adult residents in Fulton County. Background checks are required for volunteers.

Apply by creating a VolunteerHub account at mowatl.org/volunteer.

Feet of Clay
This nonprofit supports survivors of domestic violence. Duties can include organizing donated items and coaching women to network.

View the Feet of Clay Amazon wish list at amazon.com/hz/wishlist/l/I5K2GZFZMDSZ or learn how to volunteer at feetofclayatl.org/get-involved where you can also apply.

AGING IN ATLANTA

LIFESTYLE

Volunteers find purpose, vocations in retirement

Atlantans share time, talents with local organizations.

By Rose Kennedy For The AJC

You’ve probably considered volunteering for one of Atlanta’s many charities, but if you need an extra push, draw inspiration from these three metro-area volunteers. Each shares why they spend their time helping others and what keeps them going back.

Patty Tucker, Atlanta Junior Bridge League

Patty Tucker started to play competitive duplicate bridge in 1965 and entered her first mixed pairs tournament the next year. Decades later she encourages more young players in her roles as an instructor, president and creator of training materials for Atlanta Junior Bridge. The organization teaches metro-area children bridge for free.

Tucker, who has attained the Grand Life Master rank, is a professional instructor who teaches “Learn Bridge in a Day” sessions and founded Whirlwind Bridge. As a player, she enjoys “the strategy and the excitement of the game and the extended family that I’ve obtained. When I’m teaching, I am intent on sharing my love for the game and giving others the opportunity to form their own extended family and make new friendships.”

It’s particularly gratifying to share the game with a diverse group of young

people, Tucker said.

“Youth bridge has no social, religious, physical, gender or economic boundaries. It offers youngsters many opportunities they might not otherwise have available.”

Jim Friedewald, event volunteer and tour leader, Booth Western Art Museum

Jim Friedewald had no particular interest in Western art when Booth Western Art Museum volunteer coordinator Tiffany Hughes tapped him to help out four years ago.

“Now I know a lot about Western art and it all appeals to me,” the retired Marietta attorney said. “I love it.”

He started volunteering while he was still an active trial lawyer, and had more time to get involved once he started doing more professional mediation. He began at Booth’s sister organization, the Tellus Science Museum, where he worked for 12 years while he was employed full-time.

Friedewald shares his Western art knowledge while volunteering, which includes school tours on weekdays and weekend volunteering twice a month. He said the gig includes a variety of very young and very old visitors.

“I just love coming in here for any of the groups. Recently, I guided a group along a one-and-a-half-hour tour; everyone was using a walker. But they wanted to do it and we did fine; they all completed the whole tour. I can relate to that – I’m an old guy, too.”



Jim Friedewald was tapped to help at Booth Western Art Museum four years ago. CONTRIBUTED

During these sessions, a couple of hours “seems like 5 minutes – you get so involved,” Friedewald said. “It really is a rush.” He compares leading tours and telling folks about the museum to the experience of “showing off your grandchildren.”

And he has no plans to slow down.

“I’ll keep volunteering as long as the good Lord keeps me on Mother Earth,” he said.

Lisa M. Cox, iWag, Clay Feet

Lisa M. Cox has lived in Atlanta’s East Lake neighborhood for 25 years and is proof that short-term volunteering can benefit all involved.

The married mother of Henry, 22, and Patricia, 13, took early retirement from work in her family’s financial firm and had a minor stroke days later. After a year or two of relaxing and healing, she found ways to contribute to her local community.

“It makes me want to volunteer when I see something and I’m like, ‘Oh, that needs to be done and I want to get it done – let me just knock that out.



Patty Tucker started to play competitive duplicate bridge in 1965. CONTRIBUTED



Lisa M. Cox is proof that short-term volunteering can benefit all involved. CONTRIBUTED

Look at all that trash! Let me pick that up.”

Cox has held a position on the East Lake YMCA board and is just as drawn to unofficial projects, such as providing masks as part of the food giveaway at local schools, helping draw in people with supplies, and sewing masks.

“We just pulled together people who all wanted to help. We ended up giving away more than 800 masks and all felt good about it,” she said.

She’s also fostered puppies via the metro Atlanta nonprofit dog care facility iWag, though she typically uses her Facebook connections to find a suitable permanent home for

them.

“I have a preference for puppies, hound dogs, beagle mixes. The pandemic turned us on to rescue dogs and we started fostering,” she said. “It’s a good way to volunteer... Remember, when you foster (the rescue group) will provide you with the food, medical care, beds – all you have to do is provide the loving home.”

Currently, she works with Clay Feet, a nonprofit whose mission is to work with families that have survived or escaped domestic violence – particularly women who are pregnant or have kids younger than two. Cox spends a lot of her volun-

teer hours trying to work out arrangements to tap into and tweak already-existing free food opportunities and to assure valuable donated items.

A self-described “open book,” Cox said she bonded with the women in the shelter experience over her experience of being a pregnant teen whose oldest child was adopted.

“I’m really quiet in going about my business and take their cue on how much to interact,” she said. “They ask all sorts of questions.”

She encourages other people who are 50-plus to either find a cause that is important to them, or a task they like to do and find an organization that is working on that cause or needs the skill they have.

And she thinks there is a place in the world of volunteers for folks like her who want to give without an extended commitment. She started volunteering as a babysitter for those seeking services at a domestic violence response center when she was a student at Emory and has attached herself to many one-off projects in the years since.



THE
ESTATE & ASSET PROTECTION
LAW FIRM
CONFIDENCE. COMFORT. CARE.

GAIN PEACE OF MIND & PROTECT YOUR FAMILY ASSETS



SHANNON M. PAWLEY,
J.D., LL.M.
ATTORNEY AND CEO

Visit our website to register for our **FREE** weekly seminars

Trusts 101 • Estate Planning • Caregiving • Medicaid Planning

315 W. PONCE DE LEON, #600
DECATUR, GA 30030, USA
404-370-0696

LOCATION TO REGISTER:
www.elderlawgeorgia.com



Schedule Your Estate Planning Consultation

The power to stay connected with family and friends.



Hi Cindy a group of us are meeting for lunch Wednesday would you be able to join us? great we're meeting at noon at Mario's on oak street

If you or someone that you care for have trouble hearing over the phone, Georgia Relay can help with services like Captioned Telephone (CapTel®). CapTel allows users to listen while reading every word the other person says on an easy-to-read screen.



CapTel is a registered trademark of Ultratec, Inc.

To learn how you can obtain a CapTel phone at low or no cost, call 1-888-269-7477 (Voice/TTY) or visit www.GeorgiaRelay.org today!

AGING IN ATLANTA

VETERANS DAY

Eight nice deals for those who served

By Rose Kennedy
For The AJC

Veterans Day, which falls on Friday, Nov. 11, honors the service of all those who have answered the call of duty. And while we should all be sure to thank those who served, some local businesses are going a step further with free meals and special discounts honoring local veterans.

Here are eight of the best Veterans Day deals for 2022.

MEALS
Chicken Salad Chick

Traditionally, former and active duty military members are able to receive a free meal on Nov. 11, either by wearing a uniform to the store or by presenting a military ID.

chickensaladchick.com

IHOP

Veterans and active military personnel are honored with a free pancake breakfast from 7 a.m.-7 p.m. on Veterans Day, along with a 20% discount for other foods.

[Learn more at freeveteransday.com/ihop-veterans-day-discount.](http://freeveteransday.com/ihop-veterans-day-discount)

Texas Road House

Active, retired and former U.S. military members can pick up a free dinner voucher from 11 a.m.-2 p.m. on Fri-



World of Coca-Cola offers free tickets to the military, active or retired. CONTRIBUTED

day, Nov. 11, and then redeem it for a meal with a drink starting that day when dinner hours commence. The voucher must be redeemed by May 30, 2023. Call ahead to verify your location's details.

texasroadhouse.com

ACTIVITIES & RETAIL
Georgia Aquarium

Georgia Aquarium offers free admission to current and former U.S. military personnel and their families on select days, several of which are in November and include Veterans Day.

[Learn more at georgiaaquarium.org/military-mondays.](http://georgiaaquarium.org/military-mondays)

Georgia State Parks

All year, active duty or retired U.S. service members can obtain a 25% dis-

count on daily or annual park passes. Veterans who are disabled are also entitled to expand 25% discounts on accommodations, historic site admission, and recreation fees including boat rental.

[Learn more about obtaining a Certificate of Eligibility veterans. georgia.gov/locations/veterans-field-service-office-near-you.](http://georgia.gov/locations/veterans-field-service-office-near-you)

Target

The chain continues its tradition of honoring military service with a 10% military appreciation discount in early November. The discount applies to active duty U.S. service members, veterans, and their families and can be used in-store or online. Contact your local store for details.

target.com

True REST Float Spa in McDonough

For Georgians south of the perimeter, this McDonough spa donates free floating sessions for active duty military members or U.S. veterans on the 11th of each month – including Veterans Day. Book an appointment ahead of time and bring your military ID or DD Form 214 with you.

truerest.com/locations/mcdonough

World of Coca-Cola

Active duty, reserve and retired U.S. Armed Forces members can receive a free admission ticket that covers the exhibits, films and experiences. Be sure to present your military ID when you enter.

worldofcoca-cola.com/special-offers

CALENDAR FUN IN NOVEMBER

Honoring veterans, magic and more

By Lesly Gregory
For The AJC

November is full of great things to do in Atlanta. The weather is cool, and the sun sets sooner, but that doesn't mean you have to call it a night any earlier. This month, take the fun indoors, spend a day honoring veterans and start getting into the holiday spirit with these happenings around Atlanta.

SEE A SHOW
The Tempest

7:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 5, through Sunday, Nov. 27. Shows start at 7:30 p.m. Thursdays-Saturdays and 2:30 p.m. on Sundays. \$24-\$44 per adult ticket. \$21-\$41 per ticket for adults over 65. Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse, 499 Peachtree St NE, Atlanta. 404-874-5299. [shakespearTavern.com](http://shakespear Tavern.com)



Take in a dark and stormy Shakespearean tale as the colder weather settles in. "The Tempest" is full of magic, love and family drama. Arrive early and enjoy dinner before the show. The Shakespeare Tavern offers a full menu with alcoholic beverages for guests to enjoy. Seating is first-come, so the earlier you arrive, the closer to the stage you usually get.

Champions of Magic

7:30 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 19, and 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 20. Tickets: \$20-\$82.50 plus fees. Cobb Energy Performing Arts Centre, 2800 Cobb Galleria Parkway, Atlanta. 770-916-2852. cobbenergycentre.com/events/detail/champions-of-magic

Experience some unique live entertainment with this magic show full of impossible illusions and special effects. This team of magicians, from around the world, offers an original show that includes a Houdini-like escape, levitation and mind-reading. A show like this is a perfect opportunity for a special night out.



HONOR THOSE WHO SERVED
Veterans Day at The Battery

11 a.m.-3 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12. Free admission. The Battery Atlanta, 800 Battery Ave SE, Atlanta. 404-539-0228. georgiaveteransday.org/events-1

This family-friendly event includes a parade, observance ceremony and a festival in an all-day celebration of our veterans and active-duty military. The parade and festival begin at 11 a.m., and the route will travel along the vicinity of Truist Park and The Battery. The observance ceremony starts at noon. It will include speakers and a performance by the 116th Army Band.

Veterans Day Freedom Ball

6 p.m.-10 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12. \$100 per ticket plus fees. Georgia Aquarium, 246 Ivan Allen Jr. Blvd. NW. georgiaveteransday.org/freedom-ball

This annual black-tie event, held in the Oceans Ballroom of the Georgia Aquarium, includes dinner, music from a military orchestra and a special military program. You're able to purchase single tickets or buy an entire table of 10.

GET INTO THE HOLIDAY SPIRIT
Georgia Festival of Trees

10 a.m.-8 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 19, through Sunday, Nov. 27, closed on Wednesday, Nov. 23, and Thursday, Nov. 24. Open from 10 a.m.-6 p.m. Nov. 27. Adults are \$19.46, adults 62+ and children 4-12 are \$14.30, and children 3 and under are free. Georgia World Congress Center, 285 Andrew Young International Blvd. NW, Atlanta. 678-783-4455. gafestivaloftrees.org

Walk through a forest of holiday trees before stopping to grab a treat to eat or a unique gift to decorate your home. This year's festival includes a gingerbread competition, a Christmas Brick Challenge, photos with Santa and children's activities. There's also live entertainment from the main stage and a holiday auction.



Garden Lights, Holiday Nights

5 p.m.-10 p.m. Saturday, Nov. 12, through Saturday, Jan. 14. General admission: \$27.95-\$47.95 for adult tickets and \$24.95-\$44.95 for children 3-12. Atlanta Botanical Garden, 1345 Piedmont Ave., Atlanta. 404-876-5859. atlantabg.org/plan-your-visit/atlanta-garden-calendar/garden-lights-holiday-nights

The 12th annual Garden Lights, Holiday Nights at the Atlanta Botanical Garden is a dazzling family-friendly experience. Not only is the garden covered in lights, but you can see model trains, roast s'mores and enjoy holiday music. Nights close to the holidays tend to sell out, so make sure you get tickets in advance.

ACTIVE AGING

Square dancing keeps Atlantans moving, lively

By Elizabeth Crumbly
For The AJC

Marge Anderson's association with square dancing began in California and accompanied her back to Atlanta decades ago.

Anderson, a 1952 Emory graduate, moved away from the area with her first husband so he could pursue a Ph.D. in nuclear physics at Stanford University. The couple met a group of people getting into square dancing in a Sunday School class at Palo Alto Presbyterian Church. They took lessons alongside them to learn the basic moves.

Anderson eventually made her way back to Atlanta, went back to school to be a physician's assistant, and worked at Emory until 2005. She continued to dance all the while. The activity saw her and her son through the adjustment period after her divorce, and she danced with the Peachtree Squares for many years while it was an active club. The pandemic halted meetings, but Anderson, 82, hopes to get back on the floor with another local organization sometime soon, she told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

'Modern-day' square dancing

Kent Tolleson, 58, of Morningside, began square dancing in 2001. He was in his late 30s at the time and had recently moved to Atlanta. He was on the lookout for a social opportunity that didn't involve hanging out at a bar, and a friend suggested square dancing. Tolleson was initially skeptical.

"I heard it from a friend, and I'm thinking, 'Square dancing: I remember this from my junior high days,' and that terrified me," he said. "And he says, 'No. It's different. It's modern-day country square dancing.'"

Tolleson found a group twirling around to disco music, and he's been square dancing ever since.

"It was just a lot of fun from day one," he said. "You have to think. You've got to know your left from your right. You've got to hear the commands from the caller. You've got to know the moves. What it does is it keeps your mind sharp."



Square dancers perform a movement during a Kennesaw Square Dealers event. COURTESY

IF YOU GO
Where to square dance in metro Atlanta

- Hotlanta Squares, hotlantasquares.org — Atlanta
- Silver Stars, silverstarssquaredance.com — Lawrenceville
- Metro Atlanta Square Dancers Association, masda.net — Marietta
- Kennesaw Square Dealers, squaredancers.com — Kennesaw
- Wheel Arounds, wheelarounds.com — East Cobb

He now dances with the Hotlanta Squares, a local, LGBTQ-supportive club that's part of the larger International Association of Gay Square Dance Clubs. He's seen a lot of the Hotlanta members age – some members are in their 80s and 90s now – but he said square dancing has kept them moving and mentally calculating their next maneuvers.

"The exercise, I think, that the older communities get from it is invaluable," he said. "It's very good physical activity, and we have different levels of dance. You learn the beginning, and then you go to the next level. There's, like five or six levels you can learn."

Callers keep things lively with unexpected combinations.

"These callers come up with all these different patterns and stuff and make you dance with people that aren't really there," Tolleson said. "So, they make you really think, and you have to

use your brain and you have to use your body."

Now, he dances two nights a week and helps newer dancers learn the male and female roles.

An LGBTQ-friendly atmosphere means dancers take on diverse roles.

"For us in the gay group, we dance either side, so a lot of the time, (for) the straight people that dance with us, it's like, 'OK, but you're a guy. But you're standing in the girl part,' And it's like, 'But I know how to do the girl part,'" Tolleson explained. "And once they figure it out and they know that we're good dancers, it really brings two communities together."

Participants regularly go out for coffee after dancing or gather for dinner beforehand.

"One of our members just had a real big potluck," Tolleson said. "Everybody brought a dish, and we must have had 40 people in her house. There is so much socialization to be had."

AGING IN ATLANTA

ANIMALS

Older pets are sometimes perfect for older owners

November is Adopt a Senior Pet Month across the country.

By Lesly Gregory
For the AJC

Every year, about 4.1 million shelter animals get adopted, according to the American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. While kittens and puppies tend to be adopted quickly, older animals tend to have a longer wait. But there are great reasons to consider adopting an older pet – especially for seniors.

One perk is that their personality has already developed.

“Knowing (a pet’s) personality is the biggest benefit when you’re looking at adopting,” Dr. Scott Kelley from Sixes Animal Hospital at Bridgemill told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution. “It’s all about matching the right

pet to the right person.”

Senior pets can also make pet ownership more accessible for older adults who want companionship without the hard work.

Senior pets are also “less likely to be destructive in the home, and they require less exercise,” Dr. Tyler Human from Tritt Animal Hospital told The Atlanta Journal-Constitution.

Older adults owning senior pets provide many benefits, but before running out to adopt, it’s important to also consider the challenges too.

“Any pet that lives long enough will have something happen related to their health,” Kelley said. “Testing them and having bloodwork early can prepare you for future complications, but have them seen annually, potentially twice a year based on the advice of your veterinarian.”

To make access to

senior pets easy for older adults, some shelters offer incentives. The Golden Companions Program at Good Mews waives the adoption fee for all senior humans who adopt a senior cat. They understand the benefits of bringing senior owners and pets together.

“With a senior cat, you can expect lots of snuggles, loving affection and the perfect companion to binge-watch a TV series with. They don’t want to play as much, preferring a nice lap to snuggle up in every day,” said Bri Payne, director of marketing at Good Mews.

Pet owner Cris Scopa is a proud senior owner of a senior pet. She adopted Fanny, her mother’s dachshund, upon her mother’s passing last fall. Scopa happily picked up the role of dog mom to keep Fanny in the family.

“Fanny makes me happy and brings me

ANIMAL SHELTERS
If you’re looking for a pet, consider these local shelters:

■ Lifeline Animal Project
lifelineanimal.org. Locations throughout metro Atlanta

■ Good Mews Animal Foundation
3805 Robinson Road, Marietta, 770-499-2287.
goodmews.org

■ PAWS Atlanta
5287 Covington Highway, Decatur, 770-593-1155
pawsatlanta.org

■ Furkids
Cats: 5235 Union Hill Road, Cumming, 770-613-0880
Dogs: 1520 Union Hill Road, Alpharetta, 678-624-1003.
furkids.org

■ Atlanta Humane Society
1565 Mansell Road, Alpharetta, and 1551 Perry Boulevard NW, Atlanta. 404-875-5331.
atlantahumane.org

‘Knowing (a pet’s) personality is the biggest benefit when you’re looking at adopting. It’s all about matching the right pet.’

Dr. Scott Kelley
Sixes Animal Hospital

joy. She takes the edge off loneliness and adds activity into my life,” Scopa said.

Linda Reeves became a senior cat mom to Pancake through a Good Mews adoption. Reeves found Pancake online through the CATalog.

“Pancake filled the void, and I hope we have many years of companionship and love,” Reeves said.

Scopa would recommend a senior pet to any of her friends, citing one particularly special moment they share each day.

“Our bedtime ritual is a perfect example of how our rhythms coincide seamlessly. I tuck her in, give her a kiss, and Fanny gives me a lick or two in return. This peaceful moment puts both our minds at rest.”

HOLIDAYS

Best time for Christmas tree? No set rules for setting it up

By Rose Kennedy
For The AJC

Maybe the decision about when to put up a Christmas tree isn’t as pressing when you’re a grandparent or older adult who doesn’t have extended family at home.

But the love of the Christmas tree tradition doesn’t diminish with age.

Even one of the best-known celebrity grandmothers and great-grandmothers, the late Queen Elizabeth II, embraced the Christmas tree tradition started by her four times great grandmother, Queen Charlotte. It was later popularized by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, who celebrated with a tree.

According to the royal family’s website, Queen Elizabeth II and Prince Phillip traditionally gave Christmas trees each year to Westminster Abbey, St. Paul’s and St. Giles’ cathedrals and numerous schools in the area of their Sandringham estate. The royal family themselves also put the finishing touches on a family tree.

Norma Robb Thomason, grandmother to Texas interior designer and blogger Susie Robb and eight other grandkids and 10 grandkids, is another “over the top” Christmas tree aficionado. She is an even more exaggerated example of a grandmother with a fondness for Christmas trees.



It’s not even Thanksgiving yet, but that doesn’t mean that those who celebrate Christmas aren’t thinking about their trees. FILE

As for the latest you could put up this key decoration, the only guideline is not to wait until after Christmas, according to Gowen.

“If holiday decorating creates more stress than joy for you, then wait to decorate your Christmas tree until Christmas Eve,” she wrote. “Make it a family tradition and prepare your home for Santa Clause the night before the big day.”

Looking for a little more guidance? Any number of global and personal Christmas tree timelines could work to help you establish a new tradition – or confirm that your typical approach is still working.

Put up live trees around Dec. 1

If you’re opting for a fresh tree, consider purchasing and putting it up to maximize the number of days it has before it will start dropping all its needles.

“If you are cutting a fresh tree at a choose-and-cut farm, anytime after Thanksgiving would be appropriate for cutting your tree,” Twyla Nash of Elgin Christmas Tree Farm in Elgin, Texas, told Romper. Most well-cared-for live trees will last about four weeks through Dec. 25.

Start early

If you feel compelled to decorate shortly after Halloween, or even mid-October, that can work.

Decorating your home for Christmas early can “create that neurological shift that can produce happiness,” psychologist Deborah Serani told Today Home.

“Christmas decorating will spike dopamine, a feel-good hormone.”

Should you need a little extra push to get those trees set up earlier, remember the findings of

a study published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology that indicated decorating early – and visibly – may make you come across as friendlier to your neighbors.

In less scientific terms, “if putting up your Christmas tree early will bring you a little extra joy, why not?” interior influencer Ness Hancock told Good Housekeeping.

Put up the tree right before Santa arrives

You could opt to go in the other direction, as people tended to do in earlier times in America and Britain.

Chris Craig, co-founder of Christmas at Home U.K., told Good Housekeeping about how it was in Britain.

“Originally the Christmas tree was put up on Christmas Eve and left up until Twelfth Night,” he said. “But very few families follow this tradition now.”

If you’re getting push-back about trimming the tree late, let it be known that, according to Martin Jones, author of “Christmas and the British: A Modern History,” people in Britain originally did this because putting decorations up sooner was thought to bring bad luck.

You could also start the tradition of putting up the tree in the first week of December, which is the Italian tradition, or at the start of Advent, “when Christians commemorate and contemplate the birth of Jesus Christ,” according to Architectural Digest.

“It begins the fourth Sunday before Christmas and lasts until Christmas Eve, making the first day of Advent a popular time to raise your real or artificial Christmas tree.” This year, Advent starts the Sunday following Thanksgiving on Nov. 27.

Whatever strategy you settle on, don’t attach too much importance to this one aspect of celebrating, psychologist Justin James Kennedy wrote for Psychology Today.

“If you want to get into the Christmas spirit, find those festive activities that you really enjoy,” he said. “Share your time with the people you love, and remind yourself of rituals that make you feel happy connections. If neuroscience can give you anything this year, let it give you the gift of oxytocin, the ‘hug hormone’ that we all feel when we feel a loving connection.”

SRG
SENIOR
LIVING

Ultimately, it’s your experience that matters.

We do everything with that idea clearly in mind. So, go ahead, enjoy yourself with great social opportunities and amenities.

Savor fine dining every day. And feel assured that assisted living services are always available if needed.

We invite you to experience
The Piedmont at our upcoming event.

Anniversary Celebration

THURSDAY, NOV. 15TH • 3:30PM

Join us as we celebrate our anniversary with a cocktail hour and live music by Bill Gleason & Michael King.

To RSVP, please call 404.348.8917.

**THE
PIEDMONT**
AT BUCKHEAD

CARF-ACCREDITED
INDEPENDENT & ASSISTED LIVING RESIDENCES

650 Phipps Boulevard NE • Atlanta
404.348.8917
www.ThePiedmontatBuckhead.com

ASK ABOUT OUR AVAILABLE ONSITE REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

AN SRG SENIOR LIVING COMMUNITY

EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY



\$0

Medicare plan premium
Primary care visit copay
Tier 1 prescription copay

With UnitedHealthcare®, it’s easier than ever to get even more for your Medicare dollar. Our licensed sales agents will help you find a plan with more benefits — including better-than-ever dental, vision, OTC and prescription drug coverage, plus access to Medicare Advantage’s largest national provider network.

Medicare Advantage plans from UnitedHealthcare may include:

- \$0

\$0 monthly premium for medical and prescription drug coverage
- Rx

\$0 copay for Tier 1 prescriptions
- Up to \$40 a quarter for OTC products in-store or home delivery
- Up to \$1,500 for covered types of preventive and comprehensive dental

Medicare presentation: Space is limited. RSVP today.
Learn about plan options in your area from a local Medicare Plan Expert.

Alpharetta Nov 16 5pm Wellstar Avalon Health Park 2450 Old Milton Pkwy	Dec 7 10am Country Inn & Suites 4500 Circle 75 Pkwy SE	Newnan Nov 17 10am Hampton Inn 50 Hampton Way	Stone Mountain Nov 16 9am Holiday Inn Express 1790 E Park Place Blvd
Atlanta Nov 12, 18 10am Country Inn & Suites 4500 Circle 75 Pkwy SE	Kennesaw Nov 10 10am & 1pm Hampton Inn 871 Cobb Place Blvd NW	Stockbridge Nov 17 9am Fairfield Inn & Suites 825 Hwy 138 W	Woodstock Nov 15 10am Holiday Inn 1470 Woodstock Pkwy

Get to know Medicare on your scedule
Stop by during the times listed to get answers to your questions from a Medicare Plan Expert.

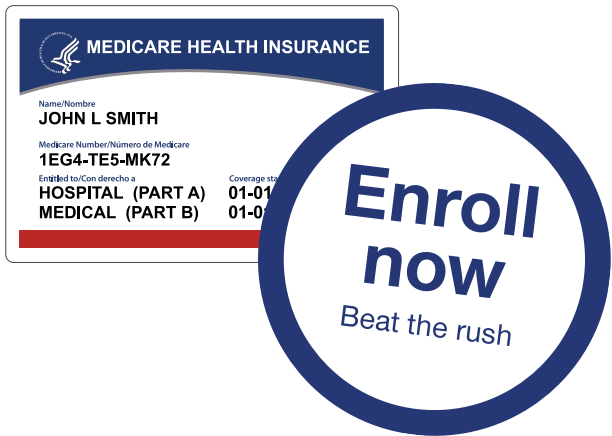
Atlanta Nov 12, 18 1–2pm Country Inn & Suites 4500 Circle 75 Pkwy SE	Rome Nov 11 3–7pm Walgreens 701 Martha Berry Blvd NW	Nov 17, 28 3–7pm Walgreens 701 Martha Berry Blvd NW	Suwanee Nov 10, 12, 14, 16 10am–4pm Walmart 3245 Lawrenceville Suwanee Rd
Newnan Nov 12, 16, 18, 29 10am–4pm Walmart 1025 Hwy 34 E	Nov 15 10am–2pm Walgreens 701 Martha Berry Blvd NW	Nov 19, 30 10am–2pm Walgreens 701 Martha Berry Blvd NW	Woodstock Nov 15 1–4pm Holiday Inn 1470 Woodstock Pkwy

It’s time to take advantage

Annual enrollment is here. Call UnitedHealthcare or go online today to learn more or enroll.

1-877-553-6918, TTY 711
8 a.m.–8 p.m., 7 days a week. Se habla español.

Or visit **ExploreUHC.com**



Provider network may vary in local market. Medicare Advantage largest provider network based on UnitedHealthcare’s national provider network report, May 2022. Benefits, features and/or devices vary by plan/area. Limitations and exclusions apply. This information is not a complete description of benefits. Call 1-877-553-6918, TTY 711 for more information. OTC benefits have expiration timeframes. Call your plan or review your Evidence of Coverage (EOC) for more information. Benefits, features and/or devices vary by plan/area. Limitations and exclusions apply. If your plan offers out-of-network dental coverage and you see an out-of-network dentist, you might be billed more. Network size varies by local market. For accommodations of persons with special needs at meetings call 1-877-553-6918, TTY 711. Plans insured through UnitedHealthcare Insurance Company or one of its affiliated companies, a Medicare Advantage organization with a Medicare contract. Enrollment in the plan depends on the plan’s contract renewal with Medicare. © 2022 United HealthCare Services, Inc. All Rights Reserved.

20150720
Y0066_220722_025325_M

H6528-006-000
GA_AJC_1106_FPA_Full