

Senior News

Georgia

Providing Helpful Information for Mature Adults in GEORGIA!



*Let's Explore
The Cruise
Features!*

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February 2026
Volume 40, No. 2

Tubman Museum and Youth Says Presents “We are History” Living Legends: When Creative Arts Meet AI – Bridging the Past and the Future!

Submitted by Ashley Woodford, Education Coordinator’s Assistant, Tubman Museum; awoodford.btwcc@gmail.com

Macon, Georgia • January 22, 2026

The Tubman Museum and Youth Says is thrilled to announce a youth-led event titled “We are History” Living Legends: When Creative Arts Meet AI – Bridging the Past and the Future, taking place on Saturday, February 21, from 12:00 to 3:00 PM. The highlight of the event will be youth bringing past Black legends to life, transforming history into living legends while inspiring creativity, innovation, and leadership in the next generation.

The event will feature:

- Youth reenactments of legendary Black inventors and historical figures, guided by actor Troy Bland
- A youth-led fashion show demonstrating how AI and STEM intersect with fashion
- Performances by the Eric Foundation Youth Choir
- Hands-on STEM activities provided by Pink STEM
- Youth vendors and entrepreneurs showcasing and selling their own creations

The Tubman Museum and Youth Says has partnered with, The Eric Foundation, Pink STEM, Hayiya Dance Theatre, actor Troy Bland, and other non profits to bring this exciting, educational, and creative experience to the community.

“This event is designed to empower our youth to lead, learn, and innovate while connecting with the incredible history and creativity of Black leaders,” said Ashley Woodford, Education Coordinator’s Assistant at the Tubman Museum. “The true highlight is seeing these past legends come to life through our young performers – it’s history, creativity, and STEM all in action.”

The Tubman Museum is working with these partners to ensure this event is accessible, engaging, and fun for all families.

Event Details:

- Date: Saturday, February 21, 2026
- Time: 12:00 – 3:00 PM
- Location: Tubman Museum, 100 MLK Jr. Blvd, Macon, GA 31201

Admission: Free and open to the public!

Local businesses and organizations can support the event through in-kind donations of food, beverages, and supplies, to help make this an unforgettable experience for all attendees.

For more information or to support the event, please contact Ashley Woodford at 478-743-8544 or AWoodford.btwcc@gmail.com or for participation call Kat Coles at 678-527-9826.

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Two New Exhibits Open at the Southeastern Quilt and Textile Museum!

Submitted by Southeastern Quilt & Textile Museum
southeasternquilt@gmail.com

January 6, 2026

The Southeastern Quilt and Textile Museum (SQTM) is pleased to announce the opening of two new exhibits: **Quilting Trends: 1945-1979** and **Quilts for All Seasons**, on view through March 17, 2026.

Quilting Trends: 1945-1979 explores changing trends in American quilting from the end of World War II through the resurgence of the craft in the late 1970s. The exhibit highlights the evolution of styles, colors, and fabrics over three transformative decades. Early quilts reflect themes and palettes inspired by the postwar period, while quilts from the 1950s introduce new patterns and fresh color combinations. By the 1960s and 1970s, quilters pushed creative boundaries, experimenting with bold colors, unconventional fabrics, and expressive designs.

Quilts for All Seasons offers a lighthearted and visually engaging experience for visitors of all ages. Featuring holiday-themed quilts by artists Jill Christie and Cynthia Hilliard, the exhibit celebrates the changing seasons with cheerful imagery including hearts, pumpkins, Christmas trees, and more.

In conjunction with these exhibits, SQTM will present a range of community programs designed to engage and inspire. Offerings include introductory sewing and quilting classes, cosplay workshops, and additional hands-on learning opportunities for all skill levels.

A complete schedule of classes and programs is available at sqtmuseum.org/events.

The Southeastern Quilt and Textile Museum is located at 306-C Bradley Street, in Carrollton, Georgia. The museum is open Tuesday - Saturday from 10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. Regular admission is \$8.00, with discounts available.

For more information go to sqtmuseum.org or contact us directly at 770-301-2187; or, email us at southeasternquilt@gmail.com.



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Taking Care!

Many Ways To Help Loved One With Heart Disease!

By Lisa M. Petsche – Imepetsche@gmail.com

Heat disease is the leading cause of death for adults. Coronary artery disease (also known as arteriosclerosis) is the most common type.

CAD is caused by accumulation in the coronary arteries of fatty deposits called plaques. This results in narrowing within the arteries, restricting blood flow to the heart.

CAD progresses over many years and may go undetected until a crisis occurs. Symptoms can include angina (chest pain brought on by physical exertion or emotional stress), shortness of breath; and, if an artery becomes completely blocked, a heart attack.

A diagnosis of heart disease is unsettling at best, and oftentimes frightening. It launches the diagnosed person and those close to them into a new world of medical information, consultations and procedures. It may constitute a crossroads, health- and lifestyle-wise.



Lisa Petsche

Coping Advice

If someone close to you has been diagnosed with CAD, here are some ways to be supportive.

- Understand that your relative may initially be in denial about the severity of their health condition. Allow them plenty of time to adjust to their diagnosis and recommendations, and keep communication lines open.
- Learn as much as possible about the disease and its management and educate family and friends. The American Heart Association at 1-800-AHA-USA-1 or www.heart.org is a good source of information.
- Focus on controllable risk factors. Commit to making lifestyle changes together, keeping in mind it takes about 30 days to develop a new habit. Taking some control will help you both feel less vulnerable.
- Encourage your relative to find an outlet for expressing their thoughts and feelings – perhaps talking with a friend,
- keeping a journal or joining a support group. And follow this advice yourself.

Practical Tips For Daily Living

- Accompany your relative to medical appointments. In addition to being a supportive presence, you can take notes.
- You may also have questions that didn't occur to them.
- Assist your relative in following the prescribed treatment plan, which may include medication, quitting smoking, blood pressure monitoring, diet changes, exercise, R&R, stress management and regular checkups. You might, for example, buy them a compartmentalized pill box to make it easier to manage medications, or experiment with heart healthy recipes.
- Assist your relative in keeping an up-to-date medication list, including a copy for their wallet. Encourage them to consider medical alert jewelry and, if they live alone, a personal emergency response system.
- Assist in setting up a record-keeping system to organize their health information.
- If your relative has a fast-paced lifestyle, encourage them to re-evaluate their priorities, streamline activities and make time to enjoy life's simpler pleasures. And to set aside quiet time each day.
- If you're concerned about the impact of certain household chores or other activities on your relative's health, consult with their doctor.

Managing Stress

- Cultivate a healthy sense of humor by watching a sitcom or funny movies together.
- Find something enjoyable to do together, such as volunteering or engaging in a hobby. Revive a former pastime or try something new.
- Refrain from frequent health reminders that your relative may perceive as nagging. Also avoid criticizing them for unhealthy behaviors. You can't force them to make lifestyle changes; trying to do so will only create conflict.
- Express concerns gently and ask if, and how, you can be of help. It's important to avoid judgment. Let the person know your concern stems from wanting to enjoy their company as long as possible. One of the best things you can do is set a good example of healthy living.
- Remind your relative that even modest lifestyle changes can make a difference. Support them in taking small steps and building on their success.

Lisa M. Petsche is a social worker and freelance writer specializing in boomer and senior health matters.



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Let's Explore The Cruise Features!

By Carolyn Brenneman, Columnist
COVER: The Scarlet Sails ladies!

Last month, we were delighted to share our sea cruise adventure with you. We explored some of the ship and put our focus on the excursion to Ensenada on our Royal Caribbean cruise. Wow, what a day! A cruise adventure is like a sleek resort where plush accommodations, gourmet dining, and immersive entertainment come together in one destination.

Maybe that's why seniors like cruising so much. Now this month, we'll delve into a few of the ship's features, atmosphere and culinary journeys. Join us as we explore the cruise's ambiance and dining experiences.

Firstly, we must say that Navigator of the Seas was a delightful 3 day trip. From the moment we arrived at the pier, we found the experience easy and accommodating for boarding. Now entry onto the ship was seamless. We scanned our carry-on bags just like we do at the airport and then passed by greeters and customer service professionals directing us to our safety briefing at the muster station. The whole experience was fast and seamless, only taking several minutes.

Today we are ready to really explore some of the beauty of this 3,600 passenger ship.

My traveling friend, Marie and I are mesmerized by the decor and elegance of the ship. We take a ride on the all-glass panoramic elevators (I took several rides up to the 14th deck and down, just for fun) which are right in the ship's central atrium, offering wide views of the interior and ocean as we travel between decks.

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Large selection of delicious foods!



Delicious prime rib ready for us!



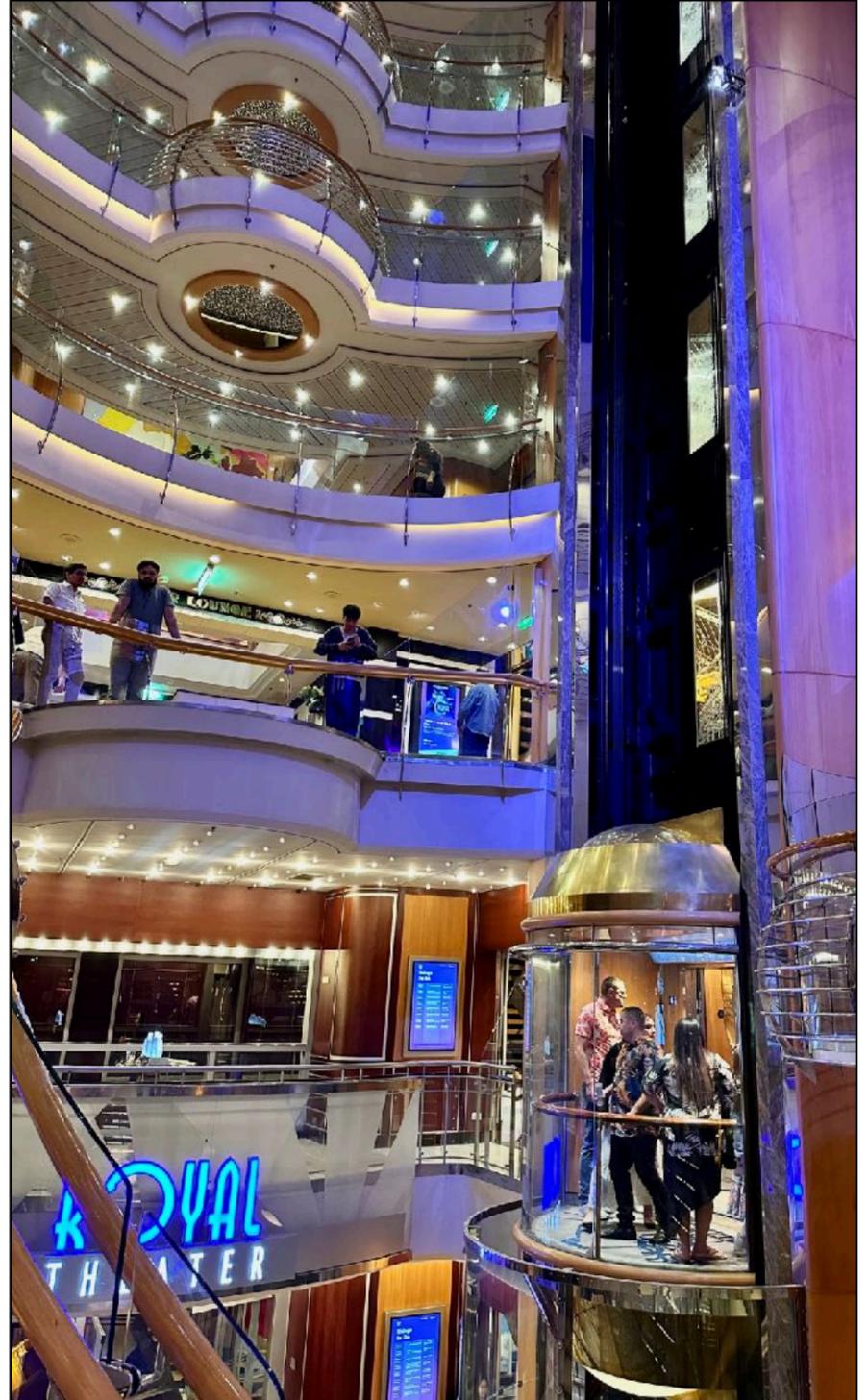
Delicious tasty desserts!

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This stunning grand atrium rises through multiple decks, like a vertical cathedral of glass and gold. We see the ship's balconies which curve inward. But most notably, are the main chandeliers which rise through the vertical space from bottom to top. Glass and crystal elements curve and spiral, and it is mesmerizing. Also, there are smaller chandeliers appearing throughout lounges and stairwells, equally stunning and captivating our attention. These glow softly and create a feel of royalty. It feels like gazing into a suspended sea of light and it's all for us.

Now we will explore the dining experience on the ship. The main dining room for dinner requires reservations and is included in the package. The room is a large circular space and feels both elegant and comfortable, with high ceilings, sweeping staircases, and more sparkling chandeliers. The table arrangements in the circular rooms are precise with white table cloths, silver plated silverware and cloth napkins. It is total elegance.

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A view of the all-glass elevator!



Live cooking station at the Windjammer!



Beautiful arrangements of foods!

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Another complimentary dining option open for breakfast, lunch and dinner is the Windjammer. It is bright, open and lively and feels expensive with long buffet stations as it reminds me of a Las Vegas Bellagio style buffet. To the left and to the right of each circular station, are chefs preparing, cooking and serving everything you can imagine.



The Royal Promenade deck!

There are appetizers that neither Marie nor I have ever tried, soups we didn't know existed and petite salads arranged like art. "I've got to try this!" I told Marie, "it just looks so interesting." And so I did on many occasions. There are so many choices from freshly cut vegetable dishes and warm breads and rolls and petite baked pastries to made-to-order live cooking, carved meats, and rotating international dishes. I indulged in the offerings of craved prime rib, roasted turkey, frog legs, grilled salmon, crab, white fish, and sirloin steak while Marie preferred to sample some of the international foods - Mediterranean-style dishes, Asian-inspired options, and Indian-flavored curries.

On a few occasions I did forget to pick up my beverage. But, of course! There's food servers walking around with a cart full of drinks - coffee, hot teas, cold lemonade, fruit punch, iced teas and water, ready to serve. "Wow, this is first class," says Marie.

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Exquisite chandelier!



Pam and Jack enjoying the entertainment!

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I can't forget the sweets! The dessert options are plentiful and artfully laid out in small petite glass dishes. Marie and I indulged in several at lunch and dinner carrot halva, tiramisu, cream puffs, blueberry parfait and many more. There are many cute, petite and stylish cakes, tortes and things I have never seen or heard of. All so delicious.

But wait! First upon entry into the Windjammer dining room, and surprisingly, we are greeted by a hostess who sings "washy washy" your hands to the cutest rhythm as all guests oblige in the ritual using one of the many faucets equipped with warm water, hand soap, and paper towels, located on each side of the entryway to the dining room. Such attentive services give the Windjammer a refined yet relaxed atmosphere.

During our 3-day adventure, Marie and I met others – Pam and Jack from Nevada and a group of senior women dressed in costumes and redwigs who call themselves the Scarlet Sails, celebrating together and sharing stories proving that joy doesn't age – it only grows louder with time.

And yes, there is more to this story and we tell you in March about the people and extraordinary entertainment on the cruise ship! So seniors, don't miss out on an

And yes, there is more to this story and we tell you in March about the people and extraordinary entertainment on the cruise ship! So seniors, don't miss out on an exciting adventure.



Washy washy greeting!

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BBB Offers Tips on Choosing a Tax Preparer!

Submitted by Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau

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The IRS will begin accepting 2025 tax returns on Monday, January 26th, and the filing deadline will be Wednesday, April 15th. If you need help with your tax preparation, now is an ideal time to ensure you've secured the services of a trustworthy tax professional. For many people, major life changes, business ownership, or simply a lack of knowledge about the ever-changing tax laws make finding a reliable tax preparer a good idea. That said, not all tax preparers have the same level of experience and training. BBB offers tips for finding someone you can trust with your finances and sensitive personal information.

First, it's important to understand the different types of tax preparers and their qualifications. Only enrolled agents, certified public accounts, and attorneys may represent their clients to the IRS on matters such as audits, collection issues, and appeals.

Enrolled Agent (EA): An EA is a tax preparer who has been approved by the IRS to represent taxpayers. An EA must either have prior qualifying employment with the IRS or pass an intensive two-day exam on federal taxation and complete a background check. To maintain EA status, they must complete a specified number of credit hours each year of continuing education in accounting methods and tax regulations. An EA may work independently or as part of a firm and specialize in specific areas of tax law.

An EA is a good option if you have a more complex tax situation. However, you'll want to make sure their area of expertise applies to your personal situation. Fees and availability may vary, but you can expect an EA to charge less than a CPA. An EA is also qualified to help you with financial planning and give you tips that could help you reduce your taxes in the future.

Certified Public Accountants (CPA): CPAs have a college degree (or the equivalent in work experience). They are licensed after passing a state professional qualifying exam. They are highly skilled in accounting. This makes them good candidates for complex tax planning and preparation if they are experienced in handling tax matters and enrolled in continuing education programs that keep them abreast of the constant changes to tax laws. If your return is quite complex, a CPA may be your best choice for tax preparation, but keep in mind they will charge much more than basic tax preparers.

Attorneys: Tax attorneys often charge the highest fees as tax preparers. For taxpayers looking to shelter part of their income legally or for those who need specialized advice on municipal bonds, estate planning, and similar items, hiring a tax attorney is a good option.

Non-Credentialed tax preparers: There are about 700,000 people who work as non-credentialed tax preparers in the United States. They often work part-time or only during the tax season. These preparers must have an active [preparer tax identification number](#) (PTIN) through the IRS, but beyond that, regulating tax preparers is done at the state level.

Most tax preparers are legitimate and competent, but it's important to conduct a thorough interview with a tax preparer before you hire them. When it comes to choosing the right kind of tax preparer for you personally, much will depend on the complexity of your tax situation.

After you've decided what qualifications your tax preparer needs, the following tips will help you choose someone who is trustworthy and competent:

Review the tax preparer's credentials. EAs, CPAs, and tax attorneys are all qualified to represent their clients to the IRS on all matters. Other preparers can help you with forms and basic matters but cannot represent you in case of an audit. Don't be afraid to ask about these or other qualifications before you hire someone.

Be wary of spectacular promises. If a tax preparer promises you larger refunds than the competition, this is a red flag. Many such tax preparers base their fees on the amount of your return and may be likely to use questionable tax preparation tactics. In addition, it's wise to avoid tax preparers who offer "refund anticipation loans" as you'll probably lose a large percentage of your return to commission fees.

Get referrals from friends and family. One of the best ways to find a trustworthy tax preparer is to ask your family and friends for recommendations. Once you have a few options, check BBB.org, paying careful attention to other consumers' reviews or complaint details. This will give you a clear view of what you can expect. You can also find a [BBB Accredited tax preparer near you](#) on bbb.org.

Think about availability. If the IRS finds errors in your tax forms or decides to perform an audit, will your tax preparer be available to help you with the details? Find out whether you can contact the tax preparer all year long or only during tax season.

Ask about fees ahead of time. Before you agree to any services, read the contracts carefully and understand how much the tax preparer charges for their services. Ask about extra fees for e-filing state, federal, and local returns, as well as fees for any unexpected complications.

For additional information, please check [BBB's Tax Tips and Resources](#).

Kelvin Collins is president & CEO of the Better Business Bureau serving the Fall Line Corridor, serving 77 counties in East Alabama, West Georgia, Southwest Georgia, Central Georgia, East Georgia, and Western South Carolina. This tips column is provided through the local BBB and the International Association of Better Business Bureaus (IABBB). The Better Business Bureau sets standards for ethical business behavior, monitors compliance and helps consumers identify trustworthy businesses. Questions or complaints about a specific company or charity should be referred.

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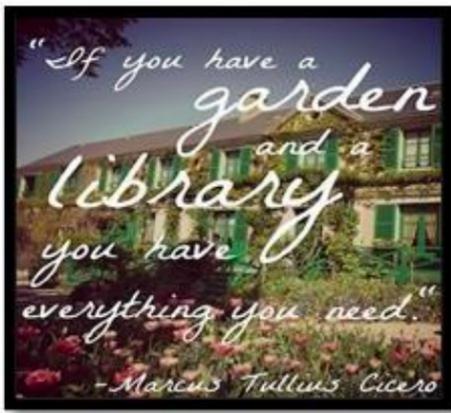
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2026

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10:15 – 11:30 a.m.

Click on the title to register!

***All books are available from the Cobb County Library System.**

***The Serviceberry: Abundance & Reciprocity* by Robin Wall Kimmerer February 13, 2026**

Kimmerer writes of the concept of reciprocity and gift economies through the lens of the serviceberry plant and its relationship with the natural world. The book contrasts the serviceberry's natural abundance and generosity with human-centric models of scarcity and competition. Kimmerer uses the serviceberry as a metaphor for a more sustainable and interconnected way of living, encouraging readers to consider how a focus on mutual care and gratitude can lead to a more flourishing world.

Register at <https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/ncn9zskYSmGEJ4GvIwjT7q>.

***Underland: A Deep Time Journey* by Robert MacFarlane March 13, 2026**

Though the title conjures up fictional fantasy, this is a work of non-fiction, exploring the Earth's literal underworld, as well as the metaphorical, and the human relationship with them. Macfarlane delves into caves, mines, glacial crevasses, catacombs, and even nuclear waste storage facilities, examining how these spaces shape our understanding of time, memory, and the future. He connects these subterranean landscapes to human history, myth, and our current ecological crisis, prompting reflection on our role as ancestors to future generations. Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/Alm06zYJtkuoW4b6iXILXq>.

***The Backyard Bird Chronicles* by Amy Tan April 10, 2026**

Over several years, Tan records her observations of the birds in her backyard, documenting their behaviors, personalities, and the evolution of her own understanding of them. The book features Tan's journal entries as well as her own sketches of the birds, adding a personal, joyful, and artistic touch to her narrative. Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/f8B-oGmlSCuNGnAqv5uXgA>.

***Playground: A Novel* by Richard Powers May 8, 2026**

Playground tells the story of Todd Keane, a tech billionaire facing dementia, who reflects on his life, his friendship with Rafi Young, and the creation of the fictional social media platform "Playground," which is heavily gamified. The novel also features Evie Beaulieu, a marine biologist, and Ina Aroita, a sculptor, who are part of Todd's and Rafi's intertwined lives. The narrative alternates between Todd's first-person account and third-person perspectives on the lives of these interconnected characters. The novel explores themes of friendship, technology, artificial intelligence, the impact of human actions on the environment, and the nature of memory and identity. It also delves into the potential for technology to both connect and divide, and the consequences of our actions on the planet. Register at

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/85081396718>.

Thyme to Read Book Club is an educational series presented and funded by the Master Gardener Volunteers of Cobb County, Inc. in conjunction with the University of Georgia Cooperative Extension Service.

All programs are free and open to the public.

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Happy Valley, Pennsylvania!

by Victor Block, Travel Columnist! Photos by Victor Block!

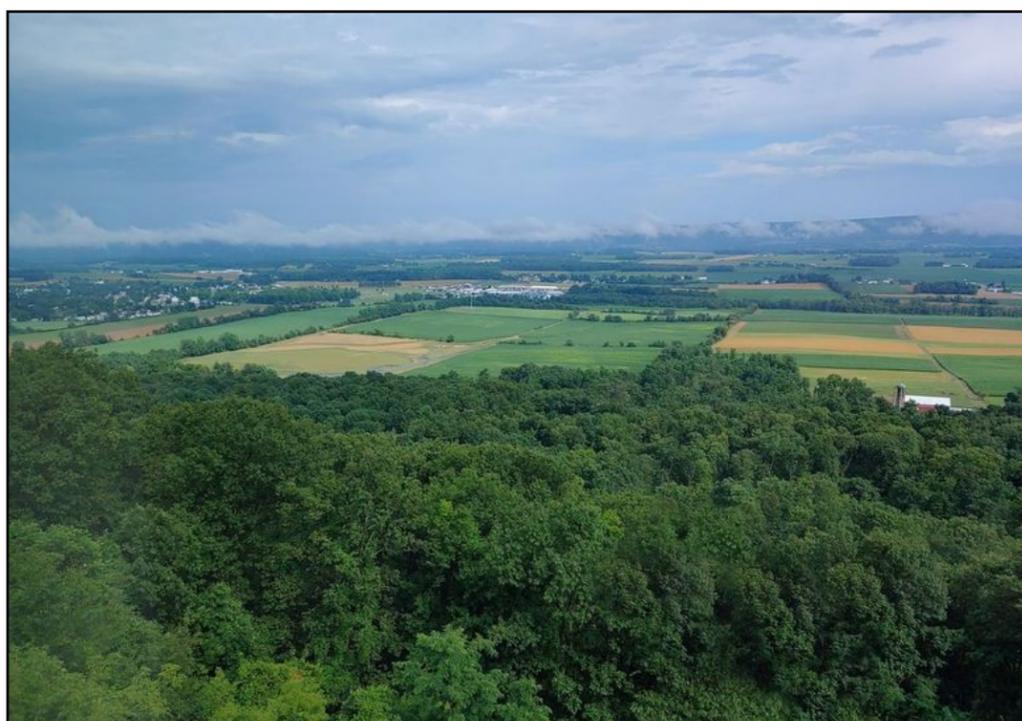
During the 1930s Depression era, people in a compact region of Pennsylvania avoided the worst of the hard times. They occupied a canyon that separates the Appalachian Plateau from the Appalachian Mountains. It's an area of rugged foothills, limestone valleys and dense forests.

The reason this locale managed to escape the dire consequences of the economic crash was Pennsylvania State University. That institution provided jobs and financial stability to those who lived and worked nearby.

Somewhat later, newspaper columnists began referring to State College, the town where Penn State University is located, as the "Happy Valley." That name stuck.

I recently visited the community and returned home with an understanding of why Happy Valley is an apt title, and description.

Penn State offers an atmosphere characterized by youth, vibrancy and culture. Founded in 1855, it has



Happy Valley Overview! Photo by Victor Block.

20 campuses throughout Pennsylvania, its main site being adjacent to the center of downtown State College.

The university and its surrounding grounds offer an inviting choice of attractions. One is the collection at the Palmer Museum of Art. It spans centuries and represents a diversity of cultures, from American and African creations to works on paper.

The Museum is situated within The Arboretum at Penn State, a lovely landscape that seamlessly blends art, architecture and nature. Among its features are acres of gardens, rolling meadows, colorful seasonal plantings, sculptures and gentle walking paths.

Nearby, outdoor art turns the entire downtown heart of State College into an outdoor museum. A downtown Art Walk trail features 40 murals, sculptures, statues, stained glass and other works.



Victor Block
Travel Columnist

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Boal Museum! Photo by Victor Block.

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Treats for the taste buds rather than the eyes are served up at the Penn State Berkey Creamery, the largest university ice cream maker in the United States. The milk comes from university cows and agricultural students contribute to making the delicious dessert.

Those dairy delights hint at the variety of field-to-fork foods which add to the destination's appeal. Amish family farms provide beef, cheese and produce.

The Heirloom Farmer offers milk, muffins, honey and more, harvested from nearby fields. The history of the Way Fruit Farm dates back to 1872, when 1,000 apple trees were planned.

History also lives in museums which recount chapters of the area's story. Iron-making began in Pennsylvania as early as 1720 and evolved into a key industry. While advances in technology resulted in the closing of most iron furnaces in the late 19th century, I was immersed in the heyday of that industry at the Eagle Iron Works and Curtin Village. The story of what became the region's leading business is told there through hands-on demonstrations and walking tours. The Curtin Mansion engulfs visitors in the genteel ambience of an upscale Federal-era manor house.

The Boal Estate has been that family's home for over 200 years, and displays the original furnishings, artwork, and artifacts, I found more intriguing the adjacent small, but imposing, Columbus Chapel. It houses what's said to be the most extensive collection of Christopher-related items in North America, including an Admiral's Desk which is believed to have belonged to the famous explorer.

The Matson Museum of Anthropology displays casts of ancient fossil life. Artifacts that demonstrate various aspects of farming and rural life are highlighted at the Pasto Agricultural Museum.

Tiny towns that are scattered about the area, each with its own appeals, are equally varied, and inviting. Boalsburg is a walkable community that clings to its quaint village atmosphere. Philipsburg displays ties to the region's industrial past. Founded in 1795, Bellefonte (pronounced Bell-font) retains much of its original Victorian architecture.

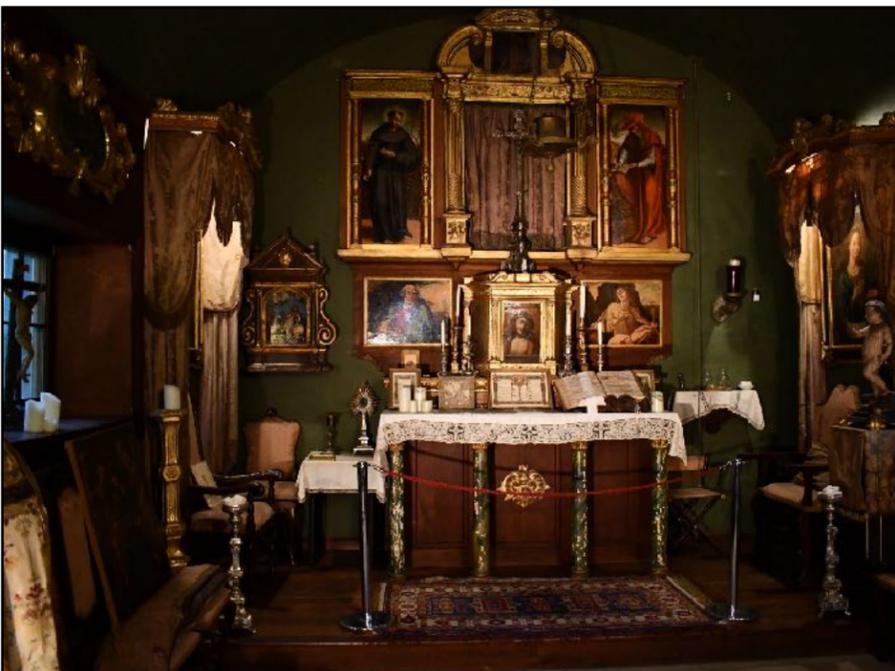
For more information log onto happyvalley.com.



Boalsburg! Photo by Victor Block.



Aboretum at Penn State! Photo by Victor Block.



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Palmer Museum of Art! Photo by Victor Block.

BBB Tip: Joining a Gym or Purchasing At-Home Equipment? Avoid New Year Fraud!

Submitted by Kelvin H. Collins, President/CEO, Better Business Bureau

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The beginning of a new year is often associated with increased interest in gym memberships, at-home workout equipment, and programs designed around living a healthier lifestyle. As consumers recover from holiday celebrations, including holiday dinners typically more robust than the standard fare, the new year offers plenty of opportunities to help shed those extra servings of stuffing. However, it is important to remain mindful of con artists who take advantage of shopper trends for their own gain and keep realistic fitness goals that consumers can carry throughout the year.

Rather than signing up for fitness classes at a local gym, many consumers may decide to purchase at-home equipment to exercise. For the past five years, Internet searches for 'workout equipment' peak during January. As is typical in the new year, BBB is expecting an increase in reports of fraudulent businesses advertising the sale of workout equipment that is either never received or of poor quality.

One consumer reported a loss of \$2,100 when purchasing an elliptical workout machine online. After paying for the equipment via Amazon Pay, the consumer reported they "received no confirmation or contact of any kind. I received no response when emailing the company."

In addition to the challenges presented by unethical and fraudulent businesses, consumers interested in improving their physical health in the new year must also assess their fitness goals and determine their priorities when choosing a gym membership or at-home system.

BBB provides the following tips to get the most out of your new year fitness goals:

Ask questions about limited free trials. Gyms often give a one-week free pass for potential members, and at-home programs provide a trial period to allow consumers to determine if it is the right fit for their fitness goals. If interested in a gym membership, spend the time to realistically determine what time of the day you would be available to dedicate toward exercise and visit the gym during these times to see how crowded it is or if there is a wait for equipment you would typically use in your workout routine. Check to see if limited trials are offered for any classes or specialized programs.

Don't feel coerced. Do not give in to high-pressure sales tactics to join a workout program immediately or make a purchase online without first researching the seller or business. A reputable gym or program will give you enough time to read the contract thoroughly, tour the facilities and make an informed decision. Be especially wary of claims that seem too good to be true, such as a guarantee of losing a large amount of weight extremely quickly.

Calculate the trust costs. Gyms and at-home workout programs often use introductory offers to encourage new members, especially in the new year. However, the price could go up more than you budgeted once the initial period is over. Make sure to read the contract carefully and understand the regular monthly fees and what they include.

Take a tour. If choosing a gym membership, take the time to tour the facility and make sure the gym has the equipment, classes and trainers you need or expect. Pay attention to the things that are important to you, whether that is the cleanliness of the showers or the availability of Wi-Fi. Ask questions and make sure you understand the gym's policies, procedures and how they maintain their equipment.

Determine your fitness goals. Determining realistic fitness goals allows you to choose a facility or workout program that is most appropriate for you and will prevent you from failing to follow through with your workout resolution for the rest of the year. Be sure to consult with the physician before embarking on a new fitness regimen, especially if there are medical conditions that might be of concern.

Figure out your priorities. What exactly are you looking for in a gym membership or at-home program? Is it a convenient location near your home or a chain with numerous locations around the country that you can go to while traveling? Answering these questions will help you determine the best fit for your lifestyle and fitness goals.

Understand the terms. Read the contract carefully before signing and make sure that all verbal promises made by a salesperson are in writing. Pay close attention to the cancellation and renewal policies. Some gyms may charge a cancellation fee if moving or will automatically renew your contract at the end of its term.

Use a credit card when shopping online. BBB strongly recommends using a credit card for all online purchases rather than a debit card, wire transfer or mobile banking app transaction. In case of a fraudulent seller or business purchase, credit cards offer additional protection and the ability to cancel charges than other forms of payment.

Start 2026 by visiting BBB.org for more tips on how to have a fraud-free new year.

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

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Heath Taylor Named President & CEO of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce!

Submitted by Neil Gwynne, 2025 Board Chair, Columbia County Chamber of Commerce • neil.gwynne@aol.com

EVANS, GA – January 5, 2026

Heath Taylor has been named President and Chief Executive Officer of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, bringing more than 18 years of experience in chamber leadership, business advocacy, and nonprofit management to one of Georgia’s fastest-growing communities. The announcement was made today by Neil Gwynne, 2025 Chair of the organization. Taylor officially began his role on February 1.

Taylor currently serves as President and CEO of the Dublin-Laurens County Chamber of Commerce, where for the past ten years he has led the organization through a period of sustained growth, increased financial strength, and expanded community impact. Known as a collaborative leader and strategic thinker, his experience spans membership development, workforce and education initiatives, advocacy, and the creation of successful revenue-generating programs that strengthen long-term organizational sustainability.

“Heath brings a deep understanding of the chamber profession and a proven ability to lead organizations through growth and change,” said Gwynne. “His leadership experience, regional knowledge, and commitment to serving both businesses and communities make him an excellent fit for Columbia County as we continue to move forward.”

Throughout his career, Taylor has held leadership roles with chambers of commerce in Georgia and South Carolina, including serving as Vice President of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce and Vice President of Business and Community Development for the Aiken Chamber of Commerce. He has overseen advocacy efforts, public affairs, membership growth, and major events, consistently increasing engagement and financial performance.

In addition to his professional roles, Taylor has demonstrated significant leadership at the state and national levels. He is the Immediate Past Chair of the Georgia Association of Chamber of Commerce Executives and has served as a Regent Partner on the U.S. Chamber of Commerce Institute for Organization Management Southeast Board of Regents, where he worked closely with chamber professionals across the region to advance organizational excellence and economic prosperity.

In his new role, Taylor will provide strategic leadership for the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce, working closely with the Board of Directors, members, and community partners to advance advocacy priorities, strengthen membership value, and support a thriving business environment. He will represent the chamber at local, state, and regional events and continue building strong relationships with elected officials, business leaders, and community stakeholders.

“I am honored to return to the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce and serve this community,” said Taylor. “Columbia County has a strong foundation and a clear vision for the future, and I look forward to working alongside the Board, internal team, and members to support continued growth and opportunity.”

The Chason Group, an executive search firm specializing in chambers of commerce, economic development, and nonprofit leadership, led the search process on behalf of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce. To learn more about the Columbia County Chamber and its mission, visit www.columbiacountychamber.com.



Heath Taylor

The Columbia County Chamber of Commerce is a five-star accredited chamber representing over 1,000 businesses in the Greater Augusta Region. As a member-driven, business-focused organization, the vision of the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce is to ensure and promote the beneficial growth of our community. For more information on the Columbia County Chamber, visit columbiacountychamber.com.

