

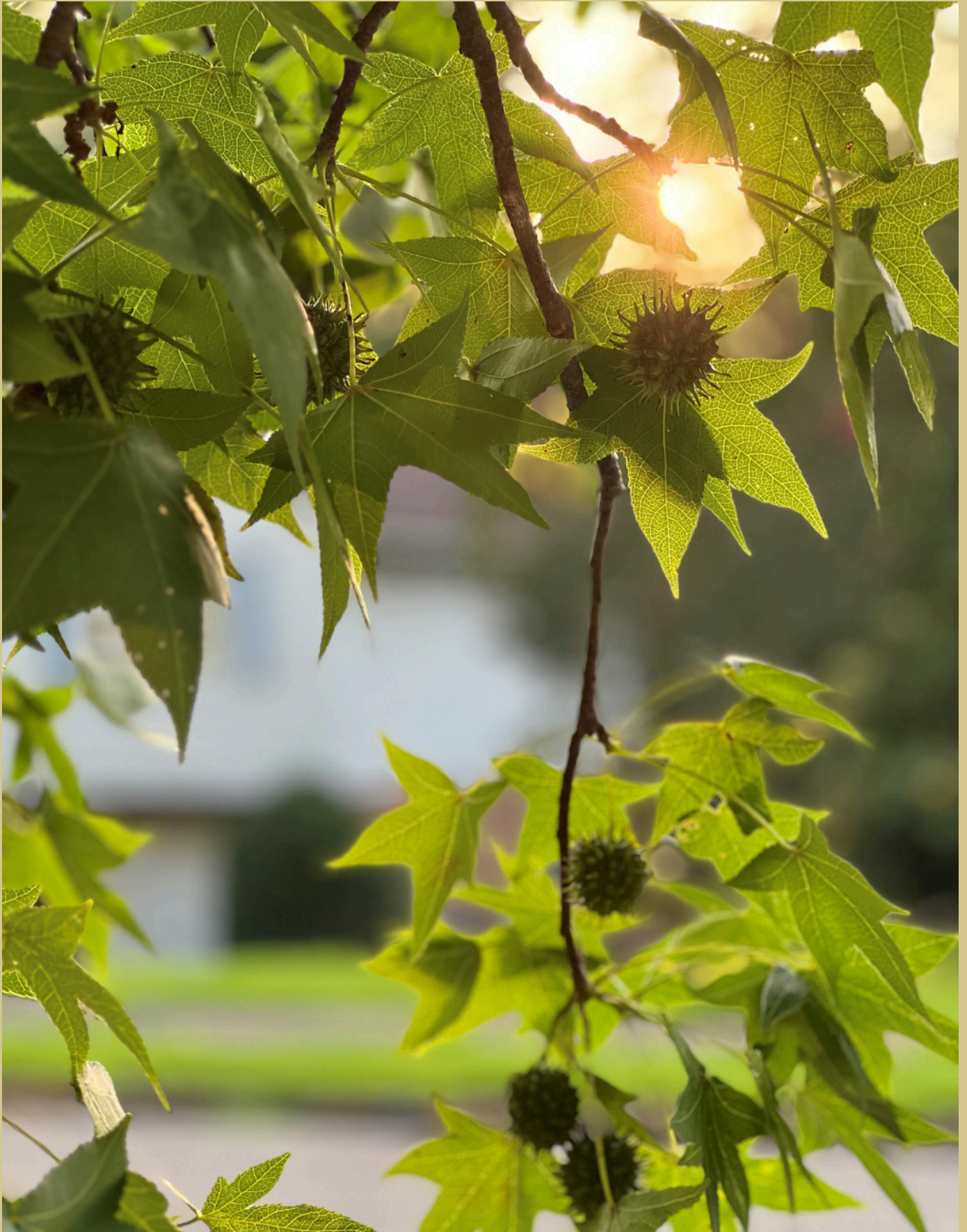
Inspiring

WOMEN OF AUGUSTA



Young runner excels Grocer loves downtown
Inside a king's cottage Zanne's final bow

May/June/July 2024



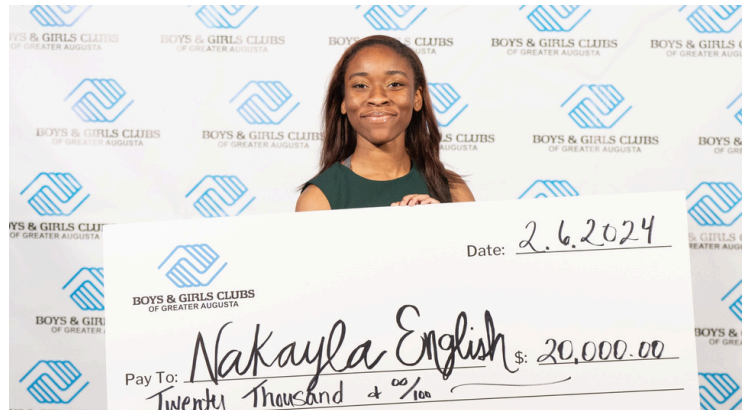
Feature photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

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From the publisher's desk:

Ah summer!

Long hours of daylight and so much to do around the area - whether it's relaxing in your own backyard, taking a kayak to Betty's Branch, picnicking at one of the parks at the lake, taking in a movie at the Big Mo in Monetta, watching the Augusta GreenJackets at SRP Park or listening to live music on a leisurely Petersburg boat ride on the Augusta Canal, there are tons of options for summer nights.

Summer is one of my favorite times of the year.

The calendar listing on pages 28 and 29 gives a few ideas of the possibilities.

I'm super excited about this issue with its wide variety of inspiring women including Maela Groshong, an elementary school student who runs in 5Ks despite having been born with only one leg. Jenn Kraus adopted a plant-based lifestyle after grappling with her daughter's allergies and her own medical condition. Kraus provided a couple of vegan recipes for this edition. I've also included a glimpse into local artist April King's cute and cozy North Augusta cottage.

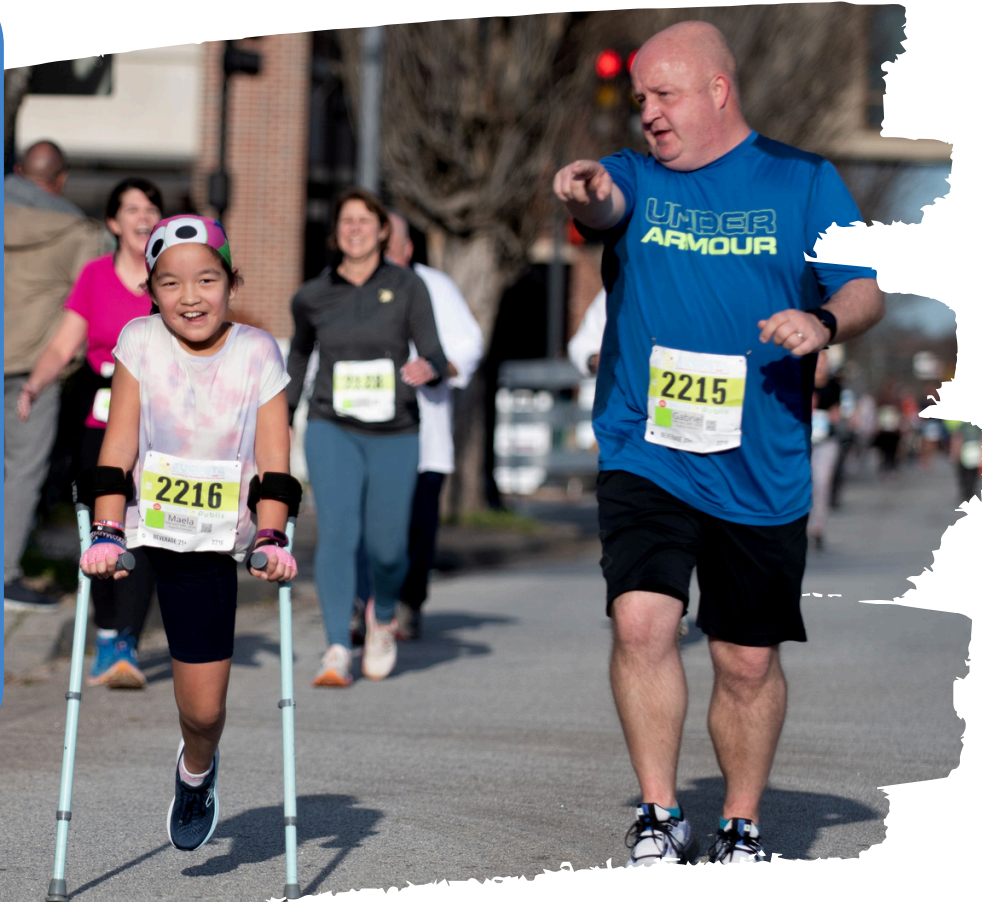
If you noticed on the cover, this issue spans three months instead of the usual two. That's to provide a shift so that at the end of the year, we will have a holiday edition of December/January instead of November/December.

If you own a business and would like to partner with us to bring stories of inspiration, please email advertising@augustagoodnews.com. "Inspiring: Women of Augusta" is available in about 50 area locations. A complete list can be found at <https://augustagoodnews.com/where-to-find-inspiring-women-of-augusta-magazine/>



Thank you!
Charmain Z. Brackett
Publisher
Inspiring: Women of Augusta

Nothing can break elementary student's stride



By Charmain Z. Brackett

Maela Groshong and her dad, Gabe, at the Feb. 24 Augusta Half Marathon/10k/5K. Photo by Mike Adams

As Maela Groshong headed into her fourth 5K on Feb. 24, she had one goal in mind, beating her personal best.

“She crushed it,” her dad, Gabe Groshong said.

The 9-year-old Cedar Ridge Elementary School third grader participated in her first 5K just a few weeks short of her seventh birthday in 2021, posting a time of about 51 minutes. Forty-nine minutes was the mark to beat, according to her dad, and she passed it with a time of 43:51.

Maela was born without her right leg, but that doesn’t affect her decision to run.

“She doesn’t let anything stop her,” said Gabe Groshong. “When she sets her mind to something like running a 5K, she does it. She’s always been that one.”

Gabe Groshong is an avid runner, having finished a few marathons and several half marathons.

This year’s Augusta Half was the first time he hasn’t run in the longer race. He ran in the 5K with Maela instead.

Gabe Groshong said he runs with all three of his children, but Maela is the “most consistent.”

“I’ve been running with my dad, and I like to run races sometimes,” said Maela.

She enjoys it because of the time she gets to spend with her father.

“We talk a lot when we run. We have fun,” she said.

Maela sees longer races in her future although it may still be a few years before that happens.

Maela trains for the events by running regularly with her dad and building up to the distance. Sometimes, they add some push-ups into the mix, and he plans to get a pull-up bar, but the best training, Gabe Groshong said, has been the running itself.

Gabe Groshong said they have already signed up for the 2025 Augusta Half 5K, and she's eyeing her next PR. They play to start training earlier.

When she's not running, Maela likes to play with LEGO and read. And she likes to push herself in other hobbies as well.

"The night before her sixth birthday, she was reading a chapter book and said, 'Can I stay up to finish a chapter book before my sixth birthday?' Of course, we had to say 'yes,'" he said.



Maela Groshong at the Feb. 24 Augusta Half Marathon/10K/5K. Photo by Mike Adams



Maela Groshong with her medal. Photo by Mike Adams



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Featured photo by Charmain Z. Brackett



Alexia Gonzalez opened The Earth Pantry in November 2023.

The Earth Pantry: An oasis in a grocery desert

Story and photos
by Charmain Z. Brackett



The Earth Pantry is eco-friendly

An eco-friendly, zero-waste grocery store in the heart of downtown Augusta wasn't what Alexia Gonzalez envisioned for her life.

"My passion was to save the ocean," said Gonzalez, who opened The Earth Pantry at 1026 Broad St. on Nov. 4, 2023.

She tried different majors such as veterinary science and marine biology, looking to find ways to steward the planet and its resources, but her journey followed a different path.

Gonzalez started blogging about sustainable lifestyle and travel and felt that educating people about sustainable living was something she could do to better care for the environment.

She also searched for eco-friendly ways to combat her dry skin and started making her own products.

During the pandemic, she and her fiancé relocated to a farm in Hephzibah.

"That's his baby," she said.



Products are sold by the ounce at the Earth Pantry.

There, he raises chickens and turkeys and cultivates crops such as watermelon, blueberries, cucumber, squash and wildflowers.

She started taking the products she made and selling them at pop-up events.

"I really wanted to have a bus to bring these things to people who needed them or to travel to take them wherever," she said.

But on a visit to Broad Street, a storefront grabbed her attention. It was the former alterations business SewCo.

"I thought 'Lord, what are you doing? I don't want a store,'" said Gonzalez.

She prayed that if this wasn't the right path that the doors would close, but she couldn't get away from the feeling that she should call the landlord. Once she did, she said things started falling into place. And a few months later, she took a leap to open the store.

At The Earth Pantry, products are sold by the ounce. People refill and reuse their containers rather than tossing them in the trash and buying new ones.



Gonzalez partners with other area businesses for some products



The Earth Pantry is located at 1026 Broad St.

“I wanted to shop like this when I was in college, and I couldn’t afford it so my goal is to make it accessible and affordable for everyone because healthy and organic foods shouldn’t be only for the wealthy but should be for everyone who needs it,” she said.

Gonzalez offers a variety of products from the toothpaste she makes, which she said is a customer favorite and the top Google review getter, to eggs and much more.

“We have coffee, tea, seasoning, snacks, baking items, local eggs, local raw milk, local butter, local bread every week,” she said to name a few of the items on her shelves.

In addition, she offers household goods such as toilet paper and earth friendly cleaning products.

She also likes to partner with other businesses and enjoys having pop-up events.

She has coffee from Buona Caffè Artisan Roasted Coffee and handcrafted knives made by her fiancé’s father. Oy Vey Schmeared Bagels and More, which specializes in New York-style bagels, and Augusta Pop Co. are among the pop-up vendors she’s worked with.

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GEORGIA YOUTH OF THE YEAR

**BOYS & GIRLS CLUBS
OF GREATER AUGUSTA**

Davidson student receives state award

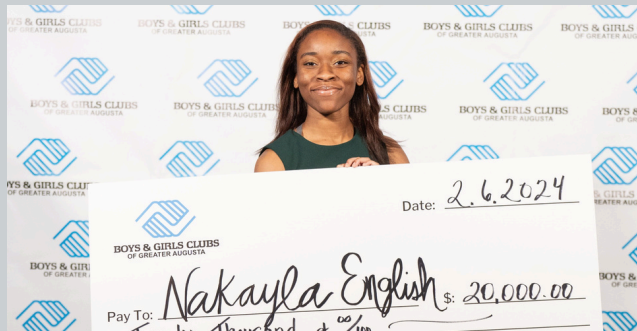
One week.

That's all Nakayla English's grandmother asked of her. Try the Boys and Girls Club of Greater Augusta for a single week, and if she didn't like it, she didn't have to go back.

"I agreed to the deal. I did a week and loved it," said English, a John S. Davidson Fine Arts Magnet School senior, who was named the Boys and Girls Clubs' Georgia's 2024 Youth of the Year Feb. 27 in Atlanta.

She started at the club in eighth grade at the urging of her best friend with the help of her grandmother.

She said the club, with its programs and the relationships she's developed, has helped her transform into a butterfly, which she calls her spirit animal.



BY CHARMAIN Z. BRACKETT

That metamorphosis is the crux of a speech she's given multiple times on her journey to becoming both the local and state youth of the year.



"I feel the Boys and Girls Clubs has prepared me for my future because not only have they helped me in my academic achievements, but they have also helped me find my passion and built my leadership and helped with public speaking, so I know how to network and find opportunities that I need in being able to have the voice to say 'this is what I want to do' and keep doing it," she said.

English is a member of the Keystone Club, designed to develop leadership as participants focus on academic success, career preparation and community service, according to the Boys and Girls Clubs' website. She's also served as its president and as a mentor.

She said she enjoys working with younger club members, teaching them, helping them find the things they are passionate about in life and encouraging them to realize "they can do anything they put their minds to."

She also volunteers in other areas of the community such as her grandparents' church food pantry twice a month, Rise Augusta and the Successteam Youth Council.

English wants to be a physician's assistant. She's been accepted into more than 40 colleges. Through her awards, she's already earned \$20,000 in scholarships at the local level and an additional \$7,000 for the state title.

"English is only the third competitor from Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta to win the State Youth of the Year competition. The late Barry Davis won in the late 1980s - when the organization was still Boys Club of Augusta - and Nataffe Lee won in the late 1990," according to a news release.

Amisha Webb, the club's college and career program coordinator, said English has worked hard to get where she is and has made a difference.

"The biggest impact that Nakayla on us as staff is she's always passionate about letting others know 'This is what the club has done for me, and I want to take what the club has done for me and put it into my community,'" she said.

Volunteer coordinator helps Golden Harvest Food Bank fulfill its mission



By Charmain Z. Brackett

Doressa Hawes is the volunteer coordinator at Golden Harvest Food Bank. Photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

Volunteer service is second nature to Doressa Hawes.

“I’ve always tried to be involved as much as possible in the community,” said Hawes, who grew up as a “preacher’s kid” with giving back to others instilled in her. Now, she connects people to service opportunities at Golden Harvest Food Bank, where she works as the volunteer program manager.

The food bank provides more than 11 million meals annually, and it takes a lot of volunteers to feed nearly 300,000 families in those 12 months.

There are several ways people can get involved, said Hawes, who currently oversees about 410 volunteers a week, but anticipates that number almost doubling later in the summer.

About 40 daily volunteers help pack backpack meals for children as well as senior citizen and family meal boxes five days a week at the Augusta campus on Commerce Drive while

another 30 volunteers help prepare food and serve meals each day seven days a week at The Master’s Table soup kitchen.

Around August, construction on the produce reclamation center is expected to be completed. Roughly 60 volunteers will be needed per day for five days a week to sort and pack produce there.

Volunteers can be as young as 8 years old to help out at the Augusta campus. They must be at least 13 to serve meals at the soup kitchen and 18 to prepare meals.

Families, church groups, companies and civic organizations often give of their time, and Hawes said there are quite a few regulars as well.

Hawes came to the food bank in 2021 after working at Augusta Magazine and spending many years in retail management.

During the pandemic, Hawes saw firsthand

how the food bank helped those in need.

“I volunteered during COVID at one of the agencies,” she said. “We had PTO time, but no one was going on vacation. I started using PTO to serve at different agencies.”

Hawes still volunteers outside work hours. She’s been involved with the Columbia County Chamber of Commerce since 2016. She’s served on the ambassador committee, as vice chair of the events advisory committee and on its board of directors. She was recognized as its volunteer of the year in 2023.

“Every time they say ‘can you?’, I say ‘yes,’” she said. “I love the factor of being able to be connected to individuals as well as businesses.”

She’s also heavily involved with her church – Parks Grove FBH Church in Lincolnton, where she’s on the praise team and serves as church administrator. Hawes said she enjoys what she does at the food bank.

“Coming here, just the fact of being able to help people has really been very humbling,” she said. “I play a small part, but I love the fact of being able to serve.”



Doressa Hawes works with volunteers at Golden Harvest Food Bank. Courtesy photo



Miss Augusta 2024

Elleana Garcia will compete in the Miss Georgia pageant
June 13-15 in Columbus

As she headed to Kennesaw State University in the fall of 2023, Elleana Garcia faced a new set of challenges including one that she doesn't hear a lot of people talking about – alcohol awareness.

“It was a really big stressor for me going to college and being with this new environment where alcohol is so normalized,” said Garcia, who is Miss Augusta 2024. Her community service initiative, also known as her platform, is Alcohol Awareness — Prevail, Prevent and Protect.

The 2023 honors graduate of Richmond County Technical Career Magnet School got the idea to adopt that as her platform from her mother.

“When I was trying to figure out my platform, I really had a hard time nailing down something. I'm passionate about a lot of things. I was talking to my mom, who is now almost two years sober – and she said, ‘What about alcohol awareness? That's not something college students talk about much,’” she said.

Garcia knew that was the right choice.

Garcia wants to cover all her bases when it comes to alcohol awareness. She wants to work with middle and high school students with a goal of preventing alcohol abuse as well as promoting organizations that help people struggling with addictions.

She recently attended a young adult recovery training program at Kennesaw to learn more about available resources, and she's reaching out to local organizations to maintain her ties to the community she grew up in.

Over the summer, she hopes to work with programs such as the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta to promote her platform as well as Hope House, which offers residential and outpatient programs to women with substance use issues.

Garcia first contemplated competing in the Miss Georgia pageant about two years ago.

At the time, Garcia was as an intern at Destination Augusta and attended a Rotary Club meeting. There, she met Quinn Shelt, Miss Augusta 2022, who spoke about her involvement with the Alzheimer's Association

"I told her that I would love to compete as Miss Augusta's Teen," she said.

But her mother was in recovery at the time, so Garcia wasn't able to compete.



Elleana Garcia (at right) at the Mayor's Masters Reception on April 6. Photo by Charmain Z. Brackett



At the St. Patrick's Day parade. Photo courtesy Elleana Garcia

Last year, Shelt held the Miss Memories Matter Pageant to raise money for the Alzheimer's Association, and Garcia received the crown.

"That gave me the confidence to really push myself," she said.

Winning the pageant came as a shock, she said. It was a last-minute decision. She ended up borrowing a dress to wear.

The morning after the competition she headed to Washington, D.C. as part of the Bank of America student leader program. She worked at the Golden Harvest Food Bank through that initiative.

Shelt continues to mentor and support Garcia in her quest for Miss Georgia in June in Columbus.

"I've been working with her a lot. She is such a great resource," she said.

Garcia plans to dance ballet en pointe at the Miss Georgia pageant.

She danced with the Augusta Ballet (formerly the Columbia County Ballet) for about eight years.

"I want to be the most authentic version of myself and highlight my strengths" as the reason behind picking that as her talent for Miss Georgia.

Although she's in school during the week, Garcia tries to come home on the weekend to make appearances as Miss Augusta. She rode in the St. Patrick's Day parade and was part of the Mayor's Masters Reception April 6. She took part in several events related to the Masters.

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May 27, 2024,

Aiken Civic Ballet Company.

June 3, 2024

Aiken Brass Band

June 10, 2024

Heart & Soul

June 17, 2024

The Experiment & the I-20 Horn

June 24, 2024

Parris Island Marine Band

The Parris Island Marine Band has been a part of the Hopelands Concert Series for over 30 years, performing patriotic staples like John Philip Sousa's "Stars and Stripes Forever."



The Brownstown Gritty. Photo by Francie Klopotic

Evenings at the Appleby celebrating its 70th season

Tuesdays - June 4-25 and July 9 at the Appleby Branch Library

June 4

Brownstown Gritty
Other performers
TBA

Music in the Park

Maude Edenfield Park, North Augusta

Concerts begin at 7 p.m.

May 9, 2024

Swing Shift
Beach Music

May 16, 2024

Wayne Hoey Big Band
Big Band Era Classics

May 23, 2024

NAHS Wind Ensemble
Concert Band &
Percussion Ensemble

May 30, 2024

Gift of Dance

June 6, 2024

Over The Hill Gang
60's & 70's favorites

June 13, 2024

Matthew Dickerson
Dulcimer

June 20, 2024

Keith Gregory
Solo guitar and vocals

June 27, 2024

Savannah River Brass
Works
Patriotic

Vegan chef creates varied menus

Story by Charmain Z.
Brackett with recipes
courtesy Jenn Kraus



Jenn Kraus, the owner of Uprooted Vegan Cuisine. Photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

Gluten-free, vegan, allergy sensitive.

Jenn Kraus has the combinations down.

The Aiken resident and owner of Uprooted Vegan Cuisine has spent more than 20 years catering to dietary needs — starting with those of her daughter.

“My daughter had 20 food allergies when she was 4. She’s now 25. I learned the process of cooking for her,” said Kraus.

Food — its preparation and service — has been part of Kraus’s life since she was 10 when her father, who owned two convenience stores, put her in charge of the chocolate dipped bananas and soft-serve ice cream.

Her daughter’s sport of choice was rowing, and Kraus also received food training as she served dozens of people every weekend during rowing events when her daughter was growing up.

“We had a food tent with 120 rowers and their families for 10 straight seasons. It was on site, from a grill, under a tent, next to a river. We had to feed everyone — meat eaters, vegans, several with allergies — all weekend. I had to learn how to fly by the seat of my pants and make it work,” she said.

She’s also managed coffee houses and worked for hotels as well as getting three college degrees including one in speech therapy. Kraus helps children three days a week and prepares meals and caters the rest of the time.

People can order her meals at her website, and she offers several different pick-up options such as the OPP Kitchen in Martinez as well as spots in Aiken and North Augusta. The OPP Kitchen is the location where she prepares the food and sometimes offers cooking classes.

She had a food truck, but it’s currently out of commission with a broken axle. She called the converted horse trailer “Juniper,” and she hopes to get it back on the road again soon. Her ready-made meal business was born during the pandemic.

“People were looking for food and didn’t want to start cooking for themselves,” she said. “I started with one meal on one single Facebook page.” Now, she offers four main courses with six side dish options a week as well as dessert items and custom options.

“They are already gluten free and vegan,” she said. “I offer allergy-friendly cooking. One customer has given me her entire allergy battery and said ‘this is what I can’t eat. I need savory and a couple of sweets.’”

Kraus went vegan about 14 years ago. She and her daughter decided to start over the summer of 2010. Not only did they opt for a plant-based menu, but they decided they would only eat food they could get at the farmer’s market.

She believes that change made a positive impact on her health.

“I was already six years into renal failure...,” she said. “My kidney numbers adjusted. I went eight years without needing dialysis. I did have 17 months of dialysis and I’m four years post-transplant.”

Kraus said she enjoys experimenting with food. A recent menu item was carrot lox, which when it was finished tasted like salmon, she said.

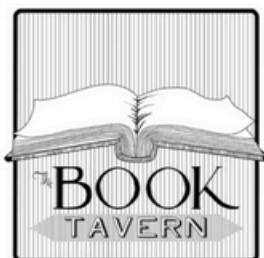
Her menu changes every week. She works with local farmers, and when they have an excess of an item, she finds herself searching for creative ways to make dishes.

A grower once gave her kohlrabi telling her that “no one knows what to do with it but you,” she said. “It surprises me what people are willing to order. I like to throw weird things out there.”

One of her most-requested meals is the compost plate, which is a play on a popular “garbage plate” dish from her native Rochester, N.Y. The original dish has items such as macaroni and cheese, baked beans, potatoes, a hot dog or burger.

Hers, which is called compost because it’s plant-based, has items such as a creamy macaroni salad, smokehouse baked beans, a chunky hot sauce and a roasted carrot dog. While her dishes are specialized, she said that not all of her customers are vegan; they just like the convenience and the taste.

“People want variety. They want the convenience of having a meal made and not going through a drive-thru,” she said.



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Chewy Ginger Cookies

Rich with ginger and molasses this cookie is drizzled with just a touch of dark chocolate.

INGREDIENTS

- 1 1/2 sticks salted vegan butter, at room temperature, plus more for greasing
- 3/4 cup light brown sugar, packed
- 2 teaspoons vanilla extract
- 1 flax egg (1Tbsp ground flax +3Tbsp water)
- 1/3 cup blackstrap molasses
- 2 1/4 cups GF flour (I prefer King Arthur GF)
- 1 teaspoon baking soda
- 1 teaspoon ground ginger
- 1 teaspoon ground cinnamon
- 1/4 teaspoon ground cardamom
- 1/4 teaspoon salt
- coarse sugar, for rolling
- 8 ounces vegan semi-sweet or dark chocolate, melted

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Position an oven rack in the upper 1/3 of the oven. Preheat the oven to 375 degrees F. Line 2 baking sheets with parchment paper.
2. In a large mixing bowl, cream together the butter, brown sugar, and vanilla until light and fluffy, about 3-5 minutes. Add the egg and molasses and mix until evenly combined. Add the flour, baking soda, ginger, cinnamon, cardamom, and salt, beating until combined and a dough forms.
3. Place the coarse sugar in a small bowl.
4. Lightly rub your hands with butter. Roll the dough into tablespoon size balls and roll through the coarse sugar (if the dough is too sticky, chill for 20 minutes). Place on the prepared baking sheet, spacing the cookies 2 inches apart. Transfer to the oven and bake for 8-10 minutes or until the cookies are just starting to set around the edges, the centers should be a little doughy. Let cool on the pan 5 minutes and then transfer to a wire rack to cool completely.
5. Drizzle or dip each cookie in chocolate. Let the chocolate set at room temp, about 1 hour. Store in an air-tight container for up to 4 days.



Sun-dried tomato pesto pasta



Sun-dried tomatoes are cooked in oil with Spanish paprika and chili flakes then tossed together with hot penne pasta, plenty of parmesan, and fresh herbs. When the hot pasta is tossed with the creamy whipped ricotta cheese it melts into the most delicious sauce.

INGREDIENTS:

- 1 jar (8 ounce) oil-pack sun-dried tomatoes
- 2 small shallots, sliced
- 4 cloves garlic, chopped
- 1 1/2 teaspoon Spanish or smoked paprika
- red pepper flakes
- kosher salt and black pepper
- 1 pound short cut pasta
- 1 cup Kite Hill or homemade almond ricotta cheese
- 2 tablespoons fresh squeezed lemon juice
- 1 cup Follow Your Heart vegan parmesan cheese
- 2 tablespoons Country Crock plant based butter
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh basil
- 1/3 cup chopped fresh parsley
- 2 tablespoons chopped fresh dill
-

INSTRUCTIONS

1. Drain the oil from the sun-dried tomato jar into a large pot or skillet with sides. Chop the sun-dried tomatoes.
2. Set the pot over medium-high heat. Add the shallots and garlic, cook until fragrant, 2 minutes. Stir in the sun-dried tomatoes, paprika, and a pinch each of red pepper flakes, salt, and pepper. Cook until the tomatoes turn deep red and are crisping, 3-5 minutes. Add 3 1/2 cups water. Bring to a boil, add the pasta, and cook, stirring often, until the pasta is al dente, 8 minutes.
3. Meanwhile, whip the ricotta and lemon in a food processor until creamy. Season with salt.
4. To the pasta, stir in the parmesan and butter until very creamy. Remove from the heat and stir in the basil, parsley and dill.
3. Swirl the ricotta into a large pasta bowl or individual bowls. Add the hot pasta and lightly toss with the ricotta. Top each bowl with additional herbs and parmesan.

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Woman's words find way into Lysa TerKeurst devotional

Holly Murray writes about the power of five minutes with God

By Charmain Z. Brackett

"Just give me five more minutes."

That's often been Holly Murray's plea when trying to finish daily tasks before going to bed. It's also the thought behind a piece she wrote that is part of Lysa TerKeurst's "Clear Mind, Peaceful Heart: 50 Devotions for Sleeping Well in a World Full of Worry," which was released March 26 by Thomas Nelson Publishing, a subsidiary of Harper Collins.



Once she settled in for the night, she sometimes realized she'd forgotten to do something.

"I didn't have five minutes with the Lord today," she said.

Murray wrote the original devotional about spending five minutes with God as part of a writing challenge in a Proverbs 31 Ministries' group. Proverbs 31 is a ministry TerKeurst founded. Murray connected with the organization after attending a conference a few years ago.

She said she's participated in several challenges and was excited when her piece was one of 40 selected from among 600 entries for a devotional book that TerKeurst published about a year ago and gave to her supporters. Murray got a couple of copies of it and thought that was the end until she got an email.



“I need to make spending time with Him a priority. He can do more with five minutes than I can.” Holly Murray.



“Thomas Nelson ran across it and loved it and decided they wanted to publish it,” she said. The version published by Thomas Nelson has been updated to include four pieces by TerKeurst. On March 29, the book had a No. 1 new release designation banner at Amazon.

Murray said the devotional she wrote encouraged her even if it did “step on her toes” because it’s not the amount of time she spends with the Lord that’s important, it’s the quality and intention that matters.

“I think a lot of people feel ashamed. ‘Did I dig in? Did I read and study today?’ The reality is that I don’t do that every day, but that doesn’t mean the Lord doesn’t love me. He still wants to know me and spend time with me. I need to make spending time with Him a priority. He can do more with five minutes than I can,” she said.



The devotional book isn’t Murray’s first foray into the publishing world.

In 2017, she published “Believing for a Miracle: Our Journey of Faith, Miracles, and the Healing of Cancer,” about her son’s cancer diagnosis in 2011. Caleb Murray was 11 at the time.

The process of writing a book was daunting to Murray at first, but she said she had a great support system including a friend whose book Murray later helped publish.

After encountering other people who also wanted to share their stories, she started Integrity Publishing in 2019.

“I thought ‘This could be something I can do. Not everyone can do it. This is something I’m good at,’” she said.

She said it’s been exciting to help people not only in Augusta but in other parts of the country to publish their books. She’s got other ideas she’s working on including writing her own devotional focusing on how God keeps His promises.



The end of a dance era

Zanne Colton took her final bow on April 26

Story by Charmain Z. Brackett



Zanne Colton at the Colton Ballet School. Photo by Charmain Z. Brackett

Looking back on her lifetime of dance, Zanne Colton's heart is filled with gratitude.

"I'm one fortunate individual," said Colton, who retired from Colton Ballet Co. after the April 26 production of "Z's Last Hurrah," which brought together some of her favorite dance pieces. "I am very blessed to be doing something that I believe I was made to do, created to do, born to do and that I can do it in my hometown."

It was love at first sight when Colton was introduced to ballet as a child.

"I fell in love with dance at 7 years old when I walked into my mother's adult ballet class," she said. Her mother always loved the arts, and she combined her desire to stay in shape with her love for the arts.

The flow and grace of the movement entranced a young Colton.

Alexis Dolinoff, a "crazy Russian from the old school" was Colton's first teacher, followed by Sallie Carlson, who would later be instrumental (along with Colton's mother) in founding the Augusta Civic Ballet.

"She was a little girl's dream of what a ballerina should look like – beautiful body, redhaired. The first time saw her she had wonderful lavender teaching clothes. I was totally enamored of her. She had tremendous taste and great creativity," she said.

In 1964, Ron Colton came to Augusta.

According to a Sept. 6, 1964 article in the Sunday edition of The Augusta Chronicle-Herald, Carlson had relinquished her post as director due to the "pressures of a homemaker's duties," and Ron Colton, who had trained under George Balanchine at the New York City Ballet was tapped for the post.

"He took a big old leap of faith and came to Augusta," said Zanne Colton, who was 14 when he arrived.

Ron Colton, who died in 2016, had traveled the world with dance and chose Augusta as the place to settle down and build a school and dance company.

“He started the school and took us back to the very beginning. He installed a system, a syllabus within the school. Even though we were older, he took us back to grade one; he took us back to the beginning,” she said.

Dance drew her out of Augusta for a few years. She traveled to New York City and studied on a scholarship and was part of the Atlanta Ballet for a short time.

“But my heart was here. I loved my home. It was good to be able to have a career here to dance and then teach and direct,” she said.

Ron Colton brought “The Nutcracker” to the area, and Zanne Colton danced in Augusta’s first Nutcracker in 1971. The first year she was Dew Drop, but she soon took the role of Sugar Plum Fairy.



Zanne Colton danced many classical roles. Photo courtesy Zanne Colton



Ron and Zanne Colton. Photo courtesy Zanne Colton

The Colton tradition of “The Nutcracker” has been strong ever since.

Zanne Colton danced many other roles during her career.

“I was very fortunate in being able to recreate some of the classical masterworks – “Swan Lake,” “Coppelia”... I was also fortunate to have choreographers create works especially for me. Ron believed in bring established choreographers, young choreographers and ballet masters to produce works for our company,” she said.

Dancers, like athletes, don’t have long careers. said Zanne Colton, who made the transition from performing on the stage to training the dancers and directing them on stage.

Some of the greatest memories she has are of the relationships she’s developed over the years, she said.



Lily Do and Keith Justin Reeves performed "You're Always On My Mind" in April 2022. Photo by Bruce Boulineau. Courtesy Colton Ballet Company. The piece was performed on April 26 as part of "Z's Last Hurrah"



Zanne Colton danced in Augusta's first Nutcracker in 1971. Photo courtesy Zanne Colton

"My greatest relationship was with my partner, Ron," she said. "We produced on stage the programs. As long as he was alive, we were working as a partnership. He directed me."

And even though he's been gone for eight years, she still feels his artistic energy and legacy in the Walton Way studio.

Other artistic relationships include her sister, Bon Ellis, who has been part of the company for many years and is also stepping down, and Peter Powlus, dancer and choreographer who she calls her "greatest friend and partner."

As she continues into her next phase, she still plans to teach but will leave the production side to another artistic director.

"Bon and I will be there whenever we are asked to help," she said.

Feature photos by Mike Adams



April sunset over the Savannah River



Soaring high

What's Happening

A sampling of activities around the area

Baseball:

Augusta GreenJackets: May 1-5, the Charleston River Dogs; May 14-19, Salem; May 21-26, Kannapolis; June 4-9, Myrtle Beach; June 25-30, Charleston; July 4-6, Columbia; July 9-14, Fayetteville; July 30-31, Down East. SRP Park.

<https://www.milb.com/augusta/tickets/single-game-tickets>



The Augusta GreenJackets opened their season April 5.
Photo by Mike Adams

Children:

Artrageous! Family Sunday: Shrinky Dink Self-Portraits, 2-4 p.m., May 5, Morris Museum of Art, One Tenth St. Free. themorris.org.

Movies at the Miller: "The Lego Movie," 4 p.m., May 19, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. Free. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.

Bluey's Big Play: 6 p.m., Thursday, June 6, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$34-\$114. thecenterofcc.com.

Movies at the Miller: "Moana," 4 p.m., June 9, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. Free. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.

Blippi: The Wonderful World Tour : 6 p.m., June 25, Bell Auditorium, 712 Telfair St., Tickets start at \$30.50. Children 2 years-old and older require a ticket. aectix.com

Movies at the Miller: "Kung Fu Panda," 4 p.m., July 21, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. Free. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.



Blippi heads to the Bell Auditorium June 25

Music:

Deana Carter: 7:30 p.m., Friday, May 10, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$39-\$49. thecenterofcc.com.

Augusta Symphony: Symphonic Jazz, 7:30 p.m., May 11, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.



Rae's Creek Revival on a Moonlight Music Cruise in April 2022. Charmain Z. Brackett/Augusta Good News

Moonlight Music Cruises: Fridays May through June. Enjoy a variety of musicians for a leisurely cruise along the Augusta Canal. <https://augustacanal.com/visit-music.php>

Music at the Morris: The Henrys, 2-3 p.m., May 19. Bluegrass and folk tunes with local favorites The Henrys. Morris Museum of Art, One Tenth St. Free. themorris.org.

Steve Earle: 7 p.m., Friday, June 7, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. \$39-\$69. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.

Jason Isbell: 8 p.m., Friday, June 7, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$54-\$119. thecenterofcc.com.

Retro Concert Series: Slippery When Wet – Bon Jovi Tribute, 6:30 p.m., Saturday, June 8, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$33-\$103. thecenterofcc.com.



Deana Carter will be at the Columbia County Performing Arts Center on May 10. Courtesy photo

K.C. and the Sunshine Band: 7 p.m., Sunday, June 9, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$49.50-\$99.50. thecenterofcc.com.

Build the Band: Fundraiser for Augusta Habitat for Humanity, 7 p.m. June 14, Miller Theater, 708 Broad St. \$29-\$79. millertheateraugusta.com (706) 842-4080.

Little River Band: 7:30 p.m., Saturday, June 29, Columbia County Performing Arts Center. \$49-\$79. thecenterofcc.com.

Theater:

Augusta Players: “School of Rock,” 8 p.m., May 3, 2 and 8 p.m., May 4, 3 p.m. May 5, Imperial Theatre. \$26-\$50. (706) 826-4707. Augustaplayers.org.

Aiken Community Theatre: “Into the Woods” May 10-12, 16-18. Aiken Community Theatre, 126 Newberry St. (803) 648-1438. aikencommunitytheatre.org.

Aiken Community Theatre: “Last Roundup of the Guacamole Queens,” July 12-14, 18-20, Aiken Community Theatre, 126 Newberry St. (803) 648-1438. aikencommunitytheatre.org.



K.C. and the Sunshine Band

A cottage fit for Kings

**At home
with
artist
April
Henry
King**



A former carport closed in by previous owners serves as April King's art studio.

Story and photos
by Charmain Z. Brackett

It was love at first sight when April King laid eyes on a “cute” two-bedroom bungalow five years ago.

Built in 1938, the home fits King's “minimal-ish” taste perfectly, but she wasn't sure her husband, Brad, would share her point of view.

“I thought I was going to have to talk him into it, but he fell in love with it,” she said, and it wasn't because of its cuteness factor.

An architect, he was drawn in by its design elements. Things that appealed to him were its strong foundation and attention to details such as the way the bricks were placed in the dining room fireplace, she said.

“They are aligned and geometrically perfect,” she said.

The couple started working on the house soon after moving in, and they've been working almost every weekend since, only recently putting the final touches on the laundry room to finish up the renovation.

King's decorating style has changed over the years especially after the birth of their son, Bennett.



Some of April King's artwork hangs over the mantel in the formal dining room



The spacious kitchen was completely redone

“It has to be functional,” she said of the décor. “I like my house to look slightly like a magazine, but it’s lived in.”

Gardening tools and mops are part of the flow in the laundry room because the Kings clean and garden, she said. While the room is aesthetically pleasing to her, it’s also useable.

“When I was in my 20s, everything was beautiful and in vignettes, but it wasn’t functional. Things got in the way,” she said. “In my 30s, my design is more functional because we live here.”

As far as a specific style, King said she doesn’t have one. She likes elements from different eras. The fun part to her is mixing, matching and marrying them together. She blends antiques with new paintings she’s created.

“I love mixing styles – like the cottage style with midcentury-modern, fun and funky with antiques. They don’t necessarily go together, but the challenge is making it work,” she said.

King said she was inspired by her grandmother, known as BeBe, who also had an eclectic decorating style. Some of the accent pieces in her home she got through her sister, Brittany Henry, who was also inspired by their grandmother. Henry operates BB’s Fine Vintage.

The project with the biggest scope was the kitchen which they opened up to make a larger space. They extended the hallway to make room for a bar. Brad King built and installed the vent hood, and they added an island to provide space to entertain.

The wood floors were in good condition, she said. No one had placed linoleum or tile over them.



Brad King built and installed the vent hood.



The primary bedroom

The formal dining room has traditional and antique elements added in. She created the silhouette artwork of her son as well as the colorful painting over the fireplace. They added the chandelier and bead board.

The formal dining room has had different functions over the years. King said she's met others who lived in the home and found that the room was once a library filled with bookshelves and books.

The living room provides a flex space. One corner is a play area, but it has decorative elements that blend in with the rest of the home.

Also in the room in front of the TV is one of King's collections – milk glass. With the limited space in the small house, she's careful about that pieces.

"I'm very intentional about my collections. I only collect things I'll take care of. I have a fun collection of earrings, milk glass and miniatures," said King who also collects artwork.



King's collection of fun earrings





A view from her living room into the dining room

“I like my house to look slightly like a magazine, but it’s lived in” - April King



King's collection of milk glass is on the living room mantle.



Off to the side of the living room is a former carport that a previous owner enclosed. She uses it as her art studio. One of the elements she likes about it is the arched brickwork.

King has worked as an artists for several years, but for now, her art is taking a backseat to raising her son.

“I thought I’d go back to work immediately, then I met him,” she said. “I love my job, but I’m happy I can still continue to do that at my own pace. I’m full time with this baby.”

With the initial home projects completed, King does have a few other ideas for future ones such as adding a master bathroom.

“We’ve really fallen in love with the place,” she said. “We’ve really connected to the house and want to be here as long as we can.”

59th Rosa T.
Beard
Debutante Club
Cotillion

March 30, 2024



Photo by Mike
Adams

Play it Forward!



Annika Sorenstam (left) listens as Suzy Whaley gives a few instructions before the clinic.

Some of the top women's amateur golfers took time out before the Augusta National Women's Amateur to participate in the Bank of America Play it Forward! golf clinic April 1 at the First Tee.

Members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta learned about putting, chipping and pitching as well as teamwork, balance and confidence. They also participated in a unique art project by dipping golf balls into paint and putting them across a canvas.



Kiara Romero demonstrates form at the Play It Forward Golf Clinic April 1 at the First Tee.



Megan Schofill (at right) giving putting tips to a Boys and Girls Club of Greater Augusta member April 1 at First Tee Augusta. Charmain Z. Brackett



Members of the Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater Augusta took part in a golf skills clinic on April 1

Aiken Art Walk

Downtown Aiken businesses stayed open a little later April 9 for the annual Aiken Art Walk.

Musicians played, artists painted, and artisans sold their hand-crafted items.

Photos by Mike Adams



Artist Jessica Graham works on a painting during the 2024 Aiken Art Walk



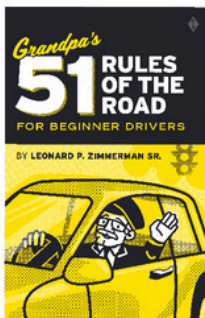
Chris Ndeti performs at the 2024 Aiken Art Walk



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AND PLEASE CALL
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