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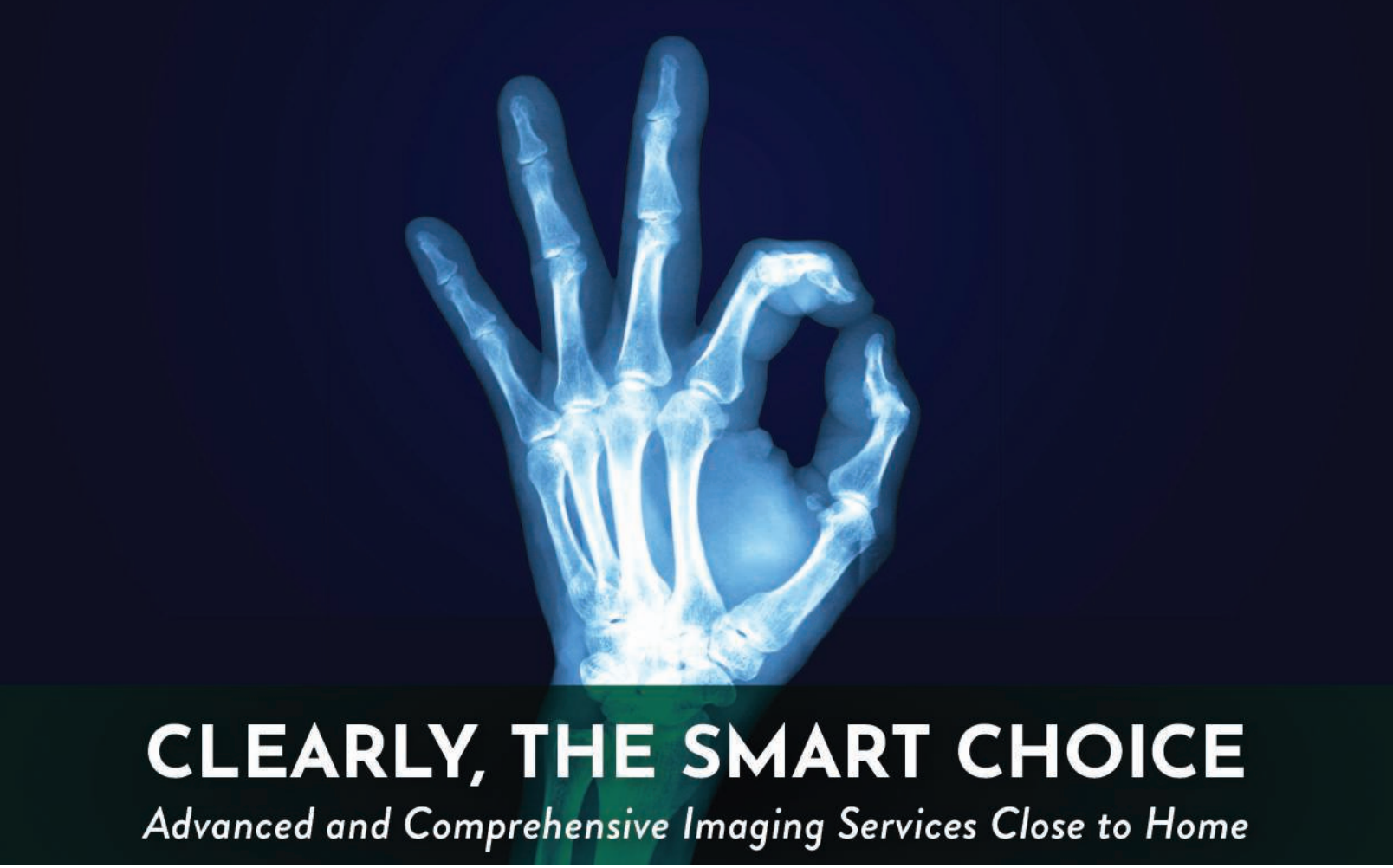
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3. Erich Perez and his wife, Dr. Misty Seale are owners of iHeart Dental in Rincon. Erich's other role is Founder and president of Kronos Media Productions and K&R Studios in Rincon. Erich and his wife are avid Jeep enthusiasts and have 5 American Bulldogs.

4. Stephen Prudhomme is a native of New Jersey who lived in Savannah and Rincon for 25 years before moving to Pikeville, TN, with his wife and son. He's written sports, features, news and business for a number of newspapers and magazines over nearly 40 years and likes table tennis, Frisbee and running.

5. Cindy Reid has been a freelance writer for over 15 years. She has been published extensively in *Effingham Magazine*, *Pooler Magazine*, and other lifestyle magazines. A native of New York's Hudson Valley, she embodies the saying "I wasn't born in the South but I got here as soon as I could." She can usually be found on a beach, a boat or at a pier at sunset.

6. Claire Sandow is a freelance graphic design and marketing professional who lives in Savannah with her husband, daughter and two cats. She received a Mass Communication degree from Georgia College & State University. In her spare time, she enjoys pursuing her many hobbies, including knitting, crocheting, quilting and running.

7. Laura Zielinski is a freelance graphic designer specializing in print design. With more than 17 years experience, Laura enjoys shaping stories through meaningful design. When she's not working, she loves spending time with her husband Keith and their three beautiful children, Alli, Matt and Claire.

8. Mabel, morale officer, enjoys roaming the backyard at home, sitting for hours on the back porch and coming to the office to greet visitors and encourage the staff. Mabel loves getting treats and taking long naps in her mommy's office in the afternoons.


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Write to us and tell us what you think. *Pooler Magazine* welcomes all letters to the editor. Please send all letters via email to Jan Southern at Jan@JDelSURMarketing.com. Letters to the editor must have a phone number and name of contact. Phone numbers will not be published.

ARTICLE SUBMISSIONS
Pooler Magazine welcomes story ideas from our readers. If you have a story idea or photo essay you would like to share, please submit ideas and material by emailing Jan Southern at Jan@JDelSURMarketing.com.

Stories or ideas for stories must be submitted by email. Only feature stories and photo essays about people, places or things in the Pooler area will be considered.

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Veterans & First Responders Issue


Jan Southern

Never have I appreciated veterans more than getting to know the sacrifices they make. Our Chief Operations Officer Morris Southern is a veteran of the US Air Force. As his proud wife, I see how the 22½ years he served affected many aspects of his life. He was able to be a part of the Thunderbirds—the elite air demonstration squadron known for its elaborate aerobatic shows—and travel all over the world with assignments in places like Germany, South Korea and the Philippines. However, sometimes that meant missing out on holidays or special occasions with his family.

Others who have served have made larger sacrifices: loss of life and limb, traumatic injuries or facing the uncertainty of homelessness or food insecurity. In this issue, we cover the Nine Line Foundation and the work they are doing to make sure that every veteran has a roof over their heads and the support they need.

We also connected with the Southeast Army Recruiting Station in Pooler, whose members give back to the community by building homes for homeless veterans, mentoring youth in underserved communities and volunteering at other community events. Led by Company Commander Captain Casey Phillips, they're willing to help around the clock.

We also appreciate the first responders who put their lives on the line to protect others.

Pooler police chief Ashley Brown has achieved his goal of serving his hometown, living up to Pooler's motto of Pride, Family and Honor. Since taking on the role in 2018, he has overseen a police force that has grown significantly in tandem with the city's population.

This issue is an honor to produce because we take pride in highlighting the people who serve for causes bigger than themselves: their families, their communities and their country. We hope you enjoy their stories.

Jan Southern

CEO/Publisher
Pooler Magazine

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Melissa McBride Stille

of Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage, LLC

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You may not know what any of these terms mean but there is someone who does—licensed insurance agent and health care broker Melissa McBride Stille. With over 15 years in the health insurance industry, she is your best ally in obtaining health insurance that works best for you and your family.

"There is a lot of information out there and it can be confusing," says Melissa. "As your local agent, together, we can look at your needs and simplify the process of signing up for health insurance."

Because she is local, Melissa has a true understanding of her community. And being local means she can get to know you and be available for face-to-face interactions. You can meet in person, get answers via text, send her an email that gets answered quickly- whatever works for you. Try doing that at a big company with an 800 number! You never have to yell "Customer Service" into the phone because the person who picks it up is Melissa!

Melissa now has two office locations to better serve her clients. "I am opening up a second location on Laurel St, the main street that runs through Springfield, which will be my second office in Effingham County. My Rincon office is inside of DeWitt Insurance Agency, which is where I originally purchased the health insurance department to become owner of my own agency." says Melissa. Both locations are by appointment only at this time. "Once both offices are fully operational, I will be at the new Springfield location on designated days and at the Rincon office on others, in addition to working from home."

Health insurance is both vitally important and complex. As your agent, Melissa will explain the basic components of health insurance such as premiums, deductibles, policy limits, exclusions etc. All of these greatly impact both your care and the cost.

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When comparing plans, even with the same insurance company, there is a lot to consider such as deductibles, premiums, provider networks, and the difference between HMOs and PPOs. Another important issue is prescription coverage, which varies widely from plan to plan. Melissa states, "I know many clients are understandably concerned with cost but the best insurance for you is not necessarily the cheapest. When we look at plans together, we will consider all the costs related to the insurance, as well as what you are actually getting for your money."

Melissa says it is important to prepare ahead of time for any life changes that affect your health insurance, such as retirement. "Don't wait to start! You need to prepare three months in advance for life/insurance changes. Contact me and we can go over the timeline, so you are ready at the right time." The same goes for open marketplace deadlines- call Melissa and get on track in advance.

Melissa gives every client her cell number - it is even in all of her advertising so that everyone, even future clients, can feel comfortable reaching out to her. She lives locally, now with two offices in Effingham County, but for the quickest response give her a call on her cell 912-239-7119.

"Being an independent health insurance broker means I work for you- the client. I look forward to getting your call and helping you determine your best health care options."

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Members of our **MILITARY**, **VETERANS**, and **FIRST RESPONDERS** have worked and sacrificed so much for our community and our country. *Pooler Magazine* is proud to tell their stories and to feature businesses and services that support them.





THE NINE LINE FOUNDATION
Giving Back to Those Who Gave So Much



Veteran homelessness is not spoken about much in this country. Our veterans, at one point in time, were willing to lay their lives on the line for us in order to preserve the freedoms we enjoy. We're all citizens of the same country; we can't turn our backs on them," says Megan Hostler. Megan has been the president and chief executive officer of the Nine Line Foundation for over ten years.

The Foundation

Nine Line Foundation, a 501(c)(3), was founded in 2013 by Tyler Merritt, a U.S. Military Academy at West Point graduate. He began the nonprofit as a valiant nationwide initiative to aid wounded veterans in need. At the time, Tyler was stationed in Savannah. Megan, who was once Tyler's West Point admissions officer, contacted him about expanding the reach of the Foundation.

Megan had participated alongside various nonprofits throughout the years. She was helping one which provided handicap-accessible vans to wounded veterans. The recipient of one of the vans, a veteran amputee, had been awarded a home by another nonprofit. He had already been involved in the tedious process for over two years. Megan knew that obtaining a new home was crucial, though she was unaware of the lengthy time frame for it—it can typically take a veteran five to seven years to receive a home. Megan contacted Tyler in order to assist the veteran with the process.

Between 2014-2018, Nine Line Foundation built five custom homes for disabled veterans and their families.

Cove at Dundee

Megan was confident that the Foundation's attention and efforts should have a primary focus: helping those veterans with no home.

"We decided to turn our attention to the one area that is really underserved – the homeless," she says.

Nine Line Foundation partnered with Chatham-Savannah Authority for the Homeless (CSAH) regarding a project to provide a tiny home community for homeless veterans near the corner of Dundee and Wheaton streets in Savannah. The project attempted to take a small step toward combating the crisis of veteran homelessness in the community.

In the fall of 2018, construction for the multi-phase project was underway. Nine Line Foundation pooled their talents and resources with several other benevolent contributors, including: Hansen Architects, Joe Marchese Construction, Thomas & Hutton Engineering Services, Gordon L. Hitt General Contractor, Garden State Tile, Eckards Flooring, Target and Home Depot, to name a few. Various local churches, schools, businesses and concerned citizens offered their time and financial support.

Nine Line Foundation helped to organize hundreds of skilled volunteers for the building of the homes; each 125-square-foot home included a full bathroom, kitchenette and a bed. Upon completion, residents benefited from a community center with an on-site clinic, a nutritionist and other comprehensive resources and services.

> "Veterans are supportive of each other; they understand each other. When they're living together, working together and healing together, there's a better probability of success"

Nine Line Foundation took pride in helping with a lot of the hands-on construction of Village #1. They also paid for the construction of Village #2 and the community center.

Moreover, Megan always knew there was so much more needed. She remained passionate about extending a hand of help to ensure homeless veterans could return to the confidence, pride and dignity they were familiar with when they served their country so selflessly.

"The entire country has to really get involved. I feel it's going to take a nation to heal the wounds of our wounded soldiers. I felt the tiny homes were just an extension of filling the gap that I saw existing in our country to make a better life for our veterans," she says.

Golden Isles Veterans Village

Aware of the phenomenal impact that Nine Line Foundation had made on the Cove at Dundee project, Congressman Buddy Carter reached out to the Foundation regarding a tiny home project for Brunswick known as the "Golden Isles Veterans Village Initiative". The goal of the project was to build a transitional veterans village for homeless veterans in Brunswick.

This is certainly a community effort, gaining the support of businesses, corporations, churches, groups and numerous individuals. Nine Line Foundation initially committed to providing the interior/exterior wall components and roofing components for 20 tiny homes, each being 128 square feet.

"The interior and exterior wall components and the roofing components for the 20 homes were all built by students from two schools in Northern Illinois—Buffalo Grove High School and Wheeler High School; the components were then shipped to Savannah before being transported to South Newport Baptist Church in Townsend where they were erected," Megan explains.

The Foundation, however, did not stop there; in fact, it has contributed to the building of ten more tiny homes for the Golden Isles Veterans Village community as well as a community center.

"Nine Line Foundation has since exponentially increased our involvement in this project, paying for the purchase of the land, paying for the underground utility work and providing the interior/exterior for ten additional tiny homes and a large 1,800-square-foot community center.

The Foundation was most recently involved in making a $90,000 donation to the project," Megan says.

The additional ten homes will aid in offering even more space to those veterans who would benefit most from it.

"The ten larger tiny homes and the component parts for the community center were built in Illinois, shipped to Townsend, then transported to Brunswick and erected



The Cove at Dundee in Savannah



on-site; the size of the units dictated that they be built on-site rather than built and relocated," Megan states.

Currently, 30 tiny homes and a large community center are erected in Brunswick, and work has begun on the interior – plumbing, electrical outlets and interior finishings. Each tiny home will be equipped with a full bathroom, bed area and kitchenette which includes an induction cooktop, microwave, crock-pot, refrigerator/freezer and kitchen supplies.

Golden Isles Veterans Village is located at 1403 G Street in Brunswick. It is a transitional (nonpermanent) housing community for veterans designed to help them get back on their feet with the overall mission to: "foster self-sufficiency and living with purpose after military life."

"It's a hand-up, not a hand-out, so they can transition into a better life," Megan notes.

Veterans are able to appreciate the community—an atmosphere shared with those who have similar stories and similar challenges as their own.

"Veterans are supportive of each other; they understand each other. When they're living together, working together and healing together, there's a better probability of success," she comments.

All veteran applicants must be registered with the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) so that all matters are handled adequately and professionally throughout the entire process.

Aquaponics Training Center

A primary component of the Foundation's transitional housing initiative is providing homeless veterans with an Aquaponics Training Center which is located in Savannah on Fort Argyle Road.

Many homeless veterans suffer from various mental illnesses along with other disorders. The center offers an atmosphere of emotional, mental and physical healing for the veterans along with beneficial job training.

"Veterans will have a consortium of care to help address the issues that caused their situation, helping them heal and reintegrate into society. They will be able to receive education and job training, along with physical and mental health services, so that they can move forward to a better life on their own," Megan says.

Megan knows that many homeless veterans have endured feelings of hopelessness, ridicule and shame for a long time; they often feel that it is their reality—a reality that many individuals could never fathom. Nine Line Foundation understands that more than just a roof is needed—giving the opportunity for a new start in life is dire.

"We're not just building housing; we're building a path to success. Residents come to learn new skills and heal in a non-judgmental environment. They can learn skills that will translate into many different avenues and career paths. They will ultimately become self-sufficient," she says.

Make a Difference

As a volunteer-driven organization, Nine Line Foundation appreciates all levels of giving from generous donors. Donate your time, donate your resources, donate monetarily; it all counts. Every cent raised makes a world of difference.

To learn more about Nine Line Foundation or make a donation, please visit www.ninelinefoundation.org. Those who would like to donate may also participate in the "Buy a Brick Campaign" by contacting Megan: megan@ninelinefoundation.org or visiting: Golden Isles Veterans Village Inc. Donor Site (bricksrus.com). The bricks will line the walkway at Golden Isles Veterans Village.

"Every penny that is donated goes toward the program. We have no brick and mortar, no salaried employees and no overhead. There is no amount too big and no amount too small. We all need to serve the greater good; that's how we all stay together as a country—giving of ourselves," Megan says. ■



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LEOPOLD'S ICE CREAM HONORS MANAGER AND VETERAN ERIC HOLLAND

Downtown Savannah icon Leopold's Ice Cream is known for its pride in our country, and it's also a place where former servicemen and women can excel with the skills they honed while serving their country.

Savannah native and Leopold's manager Eric Holland spent 20 years in the U.S. Army, serving in Operation Iraqi Freedom and Operation Enduring Freedom. Eric was a culinary specialist, making sure that everyone was fed wherever he was deployed, whether it was distributing MREs in the field or managing food and beverage operations at on-base dining establishments.

His time in the military took him all over the world from South Korea to Uzbekistan, but after retiring from the Army last year as an E-7 Sergeant First Class, Eric and his family chose to continue calling Savannah home. He began his role at Leopold's in October 2022, using his military experience to document standard operating procedures and manage team members. With his military connections, he forged the wholesale relationship that made Leopold's products available on base at Fort Stewart.

Eric has cooked for Barack Obama and Medal of Honor recipients but takes the same pride in serving guests visiting Savannah. He enjoys meeting people from all over the world and extending Southern hospitality. "That's my biggest passion, making people happy," Eric says.

Eric also has a passion for supporting his team. People who have worked under Eric's mentorship at Leopold's have developed their leadership skills and risen to become managers as well. "It's similar to when you have a platoon of soldiers and you see your soldiers grow from a private to a sergeant," Eric says. "I enjoy seeing people grow."



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THE TOASTED YOLK CAFE

Savannah's newest restaurant wants to change the way you think about breakfast, lunch and drinks. **The Toasted Yolk Savannah Cafe** celebrates the best food of the day, from farm fresh eggs and perfectly cooked bacon to club sandwiches and strawberry salads.

Serving breakfast, brunch, lunch—and fun cocktails!—the innovative restaurant features new takes on classics as well inventive menu offerings featuring farm to table ingredients. And their full bar offers a full slate, from beer and wine, to sparkling spirits.

Owned and operated locally, the **Toasted Yolk** Texas franchise was chosen for their superior menu options. "The food and the recipes are very good, and the portions are generous," the owners said, "We have been open for two months and it's been very popular." They were also drawn to the unique upscale decor that features both indoor seating and an outdoor patio. Manager Lindsay Jackson says they welcome businesses and organizations to utilize their spacious meeting room which is equipped with state-of-the-art conference room technology.

The Toasted Yolk menu is filled with contemporary and innovative choices with everything made from scratch using the highest quality ingredients. Customer favorites on the breakfast menu include:

JUNKYARD FRIES: *A heaping mound of fries topped with homemade chili, queso, and jalapenos.*

DOUBLE DECKER: *Four-egg omelette stuffed with sausage, bacon, ham, jalapeños, onions, tomatoes, and cheddar cheese.*

GRANOLA APPLE FRENCH TOAST: *French toast glazed with cinnamon-apple compote and topped with fresh granola.*

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FAITH AND FRIENDSHIP FUEL FITNESS

Story by Rachel S. Bell









Chrissy Slater and Lauren Evans knew each other in passing for almost 11 years, but a true friendship didn't begin to blossom until they joined the same Connect group at church. That friendship quickly grew into something special following the pandemic.

"Covid hit in 2020, and later that year I lost my sister unexpectedly," says Chrissy. "It was a very tough time for me emotionally, and Lauren was there for me throughout it all."

Chrissy said that while their friendship grew, so did their "Covid bellies." In 2021 the two women agreed to help each other recommit to taking better care of their bodies and committed to running together on a weekly basis. So begins the story of the "Godley Gurlz," as they are affectionately called by the local athletic community.

"We began running on Wednesday nights after our Connect group met, and then during summer break, we met with the community of runners at a locally-owned running store."

The pair eventually worked their way up to a 10k and decided the needed a bigger challenge.

The two friends signed up for their first race—the Rock n' Roll Marathon in Savannah. Lauren and Chrissy ran the half marathon as a relay team. They decided if they could survive that, then they could keep running.

After they ran the Bridge Run that December, the two women committed to run a race together every month for an entire year. Chrissy and Lauren achieved that goal in October of 2022, and are still going.

"We have met so many amazing and encouraging people along the way," says Chrissy, "Especially those who have put on these races in our communities—all to support local charities like Sister-to-Sister Facts, Run for the Wounded, Blessings in a Bookbag, Walk for Life, and so many more. Running became so much more than physical fitness and friendship for Lauren and me. It gives us opportunities to share our faith and do something we love, to reach others. In return, these people have changed our hearts physically and spiritually."

Chrissy admits they enjoy tangible rewards at the end of a good race, whether it's the plant they got to pick out for finishing the Mama-Run last May, or a chicken biscuit waiting at the finish line of the Chick-fil-A 5K.

> "Running became so much more than physical fitness and friendship for Lauren and me. It gives us opportunities to share our faith and do something we love."

"We quickly realized Lauren is a sucker for a free t-shirt, and I am all about the medals!" she laughs. "Regardless of how well we finish, we always finish together!"

Chrissy worked hard to celebrate her friend's 40th birthday in May 2023 in a big way. Behind the scenes each month, she coordinated with each race director to collect extra t-shirts from every race they ran together. "I knew Lauren would never give up her precious t-shirts from the races and I needed 30 to have them made into a memory quilt by a lady[1] at our church."

Chrissy gave the quilt to Lauren at her favorite race, the Mama Run 5K benefiting Molly's Bridge, and many of their friends joined them to help celebrate Lauren's birthday.

Over and over again, her friends agree Lauren is the reason someone feels welcomed, seen, heard, valued, loved, and supported. Her Facebook account is dedicated to cheering for her friends and promoting local businesses.

Lauren is now pregnant with her fifth child. Early in the pregnancy, Chrissy had to run one marathon by herself, but Lauren was still right there to support her friend. "I was so excited to have Lauren and Josh[2] and Marc with me at the starting line, and then Lauren surprised me at two different spots along the way to encourage me. Then, there she was waiting at the finish line!"

Godley Gurlz always finish together.

Travis Slater, Chrissy's husband, says that fitness, fellowship and faith are priorities that should be practiced regularly for a fulfilling life.

"The fact that Chrissy and Lauren practice each of these things simultaneously is incredible and has shown improvement in many aspects of their lives, while motivating others in their sphere of influence. It has truly been remarkable to be a part of."

"Running is about pushing my body to be healthier and pushing my mind to be stronger," says Chrissy, "but above all, it's about friendship and the incredible group of runners that will come alongside you while you do it." ■

[1] Martha Weston Designs

[2] Incidentally, Lauren is married to Joshua Evans, the "Get Gumped" local celebrity. It must help to have "Run, Forest, run!" in the house!

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Southeast Army Recruiting Station at Pooler
GIVING BACK TO THE COMMUNITY

Story by Cindy Reid

The U.S. Army is a huge presence in coastal Georgia, especially in the Savannah area. While most people associate the Army with deployments, training exercises and life on base, there are many service men and women who are part of the day-to-day community. Quietly, without fanfare or fuss, these soldiers help out where they can, seeking no recognition or pats on the back. One such unit is the Southeast Army Recruiting Station at Pooler, whose soldiers step in and step up whenever needed in the Pooler greater community.

Company Commander Captain Casey Phillips says his main priority and goal is to "have our recruiting units and recruiters integrate and be part of the society. Not as a visitor, but as one who is invested in the community." He says their job is essentially presenting information to young people, specifically as to the U.S. Army, but they are not here to convince anyone.

"We are here to present choices and options to anyone who may not know what is available to them," he says. "And in any community the most valuable resource is its people, and if we are taking people out via recruitment, then we need to fill in the gaps by providing our time and effort to give back."

He stresses that it is a group effort. "All five of our recruiting offices recruiters have been building houses for homeless veterans, assisting youth centers with at-risk youths and participating in many different community programs."

Capt. Phillips says pitching in with community service puts recruiters in contact with a wide range of people and shows them what the U.S. Army is all about. He says, "It's mutually beneficial but more importantly, it's the right thing to do."

Nisha M. Giustino, Director of Human Resources at Nine Line Apparel and founder of Operation Kid Forward (a 501c3 dedicated to helping underprivileged youth), says, "The Southeast Army Recruiting Station located in Pooler has been an invaluable resource. Anytime I need support for Operation Kid Forward Events (OKF) Captain Casey Phillips is always willing to help out."

Nisha says under his command the soldiers have supported multiple events for at risk children and youth. "They have helped with the Princess Ball—an event for 100 fatherless little girls, where they escort each girl and play a fatherly role for the evening."

Soldiers also helped with Shopping with the Sheriff—holiday shopping for kids; A Place to Dream, where they delivered and set-up new beds for kids that did not have one and they completed yard work and landscaping at Park Place. Captain Phillips also participated in the field trip to the NFL Jaguars Game, an incentive trip to encourage and reward for good grades and behavior, and discussed military opportunities to the youth they took.

Nisha says that, as a veteran herself, she appreciates the support and values the assistance. "I personally never worked with a Company Commander as involved with the community as Captain Phillips. He has not only been a great community partner to OKF but to other nonprofit organizations. He has definitely gone above and beyond, and we hope the incoming Commander will be involved as much as he has been. "

Staff Sergeant Gonzalez

Attitudes run from the top down and the recruiting centers certainly reflect Captain Phillips' goals for community integration.

Case in point: the face of community service at the Pooler recruiting station is Staff Sergeant Matthew Gonzalez. At 24 years old, he has been a soldier for six years, Airborne Infantry, and at this post for six months. He sees his role as both recruiter and community supporter.

He says, "My job is to get involved with the community. Obviously, officers attend as many community service projects as possible, but I am happy to be a main contact. I am available pretty much round the clock, weekdays and weekends. I do it in my free time because I think it's the right thing to do. All these people support us, so it's only right that we give back to them. I am single so I have the time and I absolutely enjoy it."

> "The young people are the future of America and I look forward to getting to know as many of them as possible in my time here."

Projects

Shiva Dadkhah, Branch Vice President at VyStar Credit Union, collaborated with Staff Sgt. Gonzalez on a project for America's Second Harvest of Coastal Georgia. She says, "It was a great project. We prepared and packaged two meals, both breakfast and lunch, for the children's summer program. Their crew of ten joined our crew of four and with their help we completed more than 4,000 meals in four hours. Without them it would not have been so successful. Staff Sergeant Gonzalez brought his team and made that happen."

She says "It's rare to run into a recruiting station so willing to help out in the community. To commit, and provide the initiative, to go above and beyond. I am certainly looking forward to further projects together."

Other projects include volunteering at:

- Sol C. Johnson High School Student Prom
- Savannah Scottish Games at Bethesda Academy
- Annual SCCPSS Superintendent's Cup Competition, a competition amongst all of the JROTC units in the Savannah-Chatham County Public School System.

Pooler Life

Staff Sgt. Gonzalez says he really enjoys Pooler life. "Pooler is amazing. I am from Chicago originally, but I love Pooler. Everything is convenient and the community is thriving."

He says he enjoys taking his daughter Mateo to the West Chatham YMCA playgrounds. "I like to go there with her. We go down the slides and do it all together. We have a blast."

As to being a recruiter, he says "the high school kids here are amazing. My role is to give them choices and an opportunity. Some have had a hard life and they don't know what the U.S. Army can offer them. The young people are the future of America and I look forward to getting to know as many of them as possible in my time here." ■




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Shirlenia is involved in a wide variety of community endeavors. As an Executive Pastor, she keeps faith first in everything she does. And as a 20-year retired military veteran and U.S. Army Captain, she is deeply dedicated as a servant leader. As a devoted Proverbs 31 woman, she enjoys the many blessings and challenges of raising a healthy family.

Shirlenia understands that Pooler is at the forefront of tremendous growth and is committed to using her experience-driven leadership to help guide the city into a bright future. With an unwavering commitment to community service, youth initiatives and whole/healthy families, Shirlenia will always serve the community towards excellence.

With passion, desire, and faith over fear, Shirlena will continue to commit selfless service towards all community endeavors. **Elect Shirlenia Daniel for Pooler City Council this November.**

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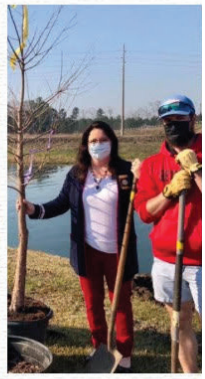
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RIGHT AT HOME: Mutual Admiration Between Pooler Police Chief and Community

Story by Stephen Prudhomme
Photos by Leidi Lester

Much has changed since Ashley Brown was growing up in Pooler in the latter quarter of the 20th century. It's experienced explosive growth in the past 10 years—Brown used to hunt deer at the site of Tanger Outlet.

What remains unchanged is that Brown still lives in Pooler. Instead of hunting deer, however, he's on the prowl for lawbreakers.

Brown, 51, is the Pooler police chief. He was appointed to the position while serving on the Pooler City Council. Prior to that, Brown worked with the Savannah Police Department as a patrolman, detective and in various other capacities for 24 years.

Coming Home

Although he enjoyed working in Savannah, Brown dreamed of being the police chief in his hometown. His dream became a reality, and five years later he feels right at home.

> "Chief Brown stands behind the City of Pooler's motto: Pride, Family and Honor."

"My family's been here since the late 1800s," Brown said. "I live in my great-grandmother's home. This is home."

Brown said he thought he was a good police officer, but there was a learning curve when he became police chief.

"It was a big change for me," he said. "I'm an administrator, manager... There was a lot to learn. It took two years to reach the point where I wanted to be."

In response to Pooler's growth, the department staff has expanded to 80. In the past five years, the number of police officers has increased from 41 to 65. Brown said he has an extremely good staff with great ideas. "I'm not a one-man staff," he said. "We're a team."

That team includes Sgt. James S. Self, administrative services supervisor. He's worked with Brown for over five years.

"He has demonstrated professionalism, dedication, and support to his officers and civilian staff,"

Self said. "Chief Brown is a forward-thinking chief who focuses not only on the current state of the police department and city but also on the future. Chief Brown stands behind the City of Pooler's motto: Pride, Family and Honor."

The chief is very outgoing on both a professional and personal level, Self added, noting he guides him in his position as administrative services supervisor through knowledge and lessons he's gained through his lengthy career in law enforcement. Brown's made a positive impact outside the department as well.

"In the community, Chief Brown is well-liked and takes the opportunity to interact with the public, whether it is a local convenience store or shopping mall."

Donnie Tuten is owner of Chatham Classic Homes in Pooler. He's known Brown for 15 years and recalled how the latter jumped in the Savannah River in uniform and saved two people from drowning during a St. Patrick's celebration along River Street.

"Ashley's an outstanding guy," Tuten said. "He takes a lot of pride in his work and knows all the families and their history. He's a real asset to the community. There's not much crime here. If there's low crime, business will thrive. The Pooler Police Department helps my business."

Surprisingly, given the city's expansion, crime has not kept pace. Brown said they've maintained the "baseline." Shoplifting, he noted, makes up half of the crime. To combat this, Brown said he's added staff for greater visibility and faster response time and pays attention to crime stats and locations and makes the necessary adjustments.

Car break-ins remain a problem. The countermeasures are tried and true. "Lock the car and hide your belongings," Brown said.

Working Hard From Day One

Cpl. Nicholas Heintzman has been a member of the Pooler Police Department for over five years. He joined shortly before Brown was appointed police chief.

"From day one, Chief Brown took steps towards making it the greatest department in the county," said Heintzman, a member of the patrol division who worked for a sheriff's department and small town police department before coming to Pooler. "Chief Brown exhibits all the qualities that a leader should


CHIEF
A. BROWN


C. Ashley Brown
Chief of Police

have and believes in his officers. He is a shining example of how hard work and dedication can result in accomplishing major results."

Heintzman added Brown knows every person in the office by name and makes it known that they are a family and anyone can go to him for advice and his door is always open. His ability to relate to people extends to the community.

"I do not believe there is a single resident of Pooler who does not know who Chief Brown is," Heintzman said. "Many times, while speaking to citizens, I will be asked, 'How is Chief Ashley doing.' That question is usually followed up by a story from before he was the chief. He is never afraid to do the hard work and even cut down a few trees after a hurricane came through."

Teaching Moments

Police work, as with any other job, won't be performed without a hitch. Errors will be made by men and women charged with protecting and defending the public it serves. Instead of castigating his staff for mistakes, Brown uses them as teaching moments.

"He has always shown me that he believes in me through the good and bad," Heintzman said. "He shows that mistakes are learning experiences that you use to better yourself. Working for Chief Brown has been an absolute honor and I look forward to many more years to come."

Family History of Service

Brown has been around law enforcement most of his life. His father was a retired police lieutenant, while his stepfather was the police chief in Port Wentworth.

"I was around it," Brown said. "I loved the stories."

> "Chief Brown exhibits all the qualities that a leader should have and believes in his officers. He is a shining example of how hard work and dedication can result in accomplishing major results."

After graduating from Groves High School, Brown attended Armstrong Atlantic State University. He said he was leaning toward a career in law enforcement but hadn't committed to a major. That changed after taking a particular course during his freshman year.

"I took criminal justice as an elective," Brown said. "That was the affirmation I needed to pursue a career in that field. I ended up getting my degree in criminal justice."

Eighteen months after graduating from college, Brown joined the Savannah Police Department as a patrolman. That started a 24-year odyssey that had him working in all areas of the city and included three stints downtown.

"I liked it downtown," Brown said. "I liked catching bad guys. That's what you're supposed to do - be productive and do the job you're sent to do."

Brown also worked homicide, undercover and, his favorite, bicycle patrol. "I liked being outside," Brown said. "It was a great experience."

Finding his Way Back to Pooler

In 2010, Brown said he was asked to apply for the job of Pooler's police chief following the death of C.E. "Butch" Chan but decided against it. "I wasn't ready," he said.

Eight years later, Brown, elected to Pooler City Council in 2016, was ready. Now that he's back home and has the job of his dreams, Brown's in no hurry to hang up his gun and holster.

"I won't leave until I'm confident someone can take over," said Brown, who away from work enjoys fishing and being a 'professional goofball.' "I'm invested in the department. I like having a hand in people's lives and feeling good about where they live and continue to enjoy a quality life in Pooler." ■



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Savannah Ghost Pirates mascot, Davy, joined with YMCA of Coastal Georgia leadership and members of the construction and design teams to welcome the public to "Treasure the Y" at the ribbon-cutting ceremony. The continuation of the reinvestment project will move to the Islands Family YMCA and then on to the Habersham YMCA.

"From fitness classes to youth programs, the West Chatham YMCA is a forward-thinking endeavor that is dedicated to serving the community," said Joel Smoker, YMCA of Coastal Georgia CEO. "Whether you are looking to stay fit or get involved with a variety of activities, the West Chatham YMCA has something for everyone. We are so pleased with the results and are happy to welcome the community to this reenvisioned branch."

Felder & Associates, a distinguished and award-winning architecture firm in Savannah specializing in historic preservation, commercial and high-end residential building projects, is the architect on the multi-faceted project. West Construction, a commercial general contracting company based in Savannah, Ga., is managing the construction.

"Fitness centers that were constructed during the 1990s were designed to cater to the needs and demands of that era. However, with the evolution of trends and clientele, the requirements for fitness centers have also evolved," said Brian Felder, Founder and Principal Architect of Felder & Associates. "The latest trends and newer customer base require open floor plan spaces that provide ample room for movement, as opposed to just standing in one place and lifting weights. This means that modern fitness centers need to have dynamic spaces that can accommodate different types of programs and activities."

> "The modern wellness center includes state-of-the-art equipment, innovative programming and a community-centered atmosphere"

Many spaces in the West Chatham YMCA branch were redesigned for more social interaction and functional fitness. Most surfaces were refreshed with updated colors and textures. Additionally, the ceiling was raised to further increase the sense of space. The open floor plan adds flexibility with availability for repurposing it in the future as fitness trends continue to evolve over the next decade.

"The YMCA has long been a pillar of our community, and the renovated West Chatham location is no exception. With the growth of the Pooler area, this state-of-the-art facility is designed to meet the needs of every member," said Matt West, Owner of West Construction Company.

"As a dedicated member of the YMCA for the past 31 years, visiting three to four times a week, you could say I've been studying this project for a while," Felder continued. "While staying active and healthy has always been a primary focus, the YMCA has evolved to incorporate new spaces that foster social connections and updated interior design that enhances the overall experience. Personally, I am thrilled with the changes as a member, but as a professional, I must express my satisfaction with the outcome. The YMCA's transformation has been a long time coming, and I couldn't be more pleased with the final product."

West Chatham YMCA
165 Isaac G. Larouche Dr.,
Pooler, GA
www.ymcaofcoastalga.org/branch/west-chatham/.



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POOLER IMAGING 3D MAMMOGRAPHY

There's no need to leave Pooler when you need an MRI, CT scan, X-ray or ultrasound. And now that also includes 3D Mammograms.

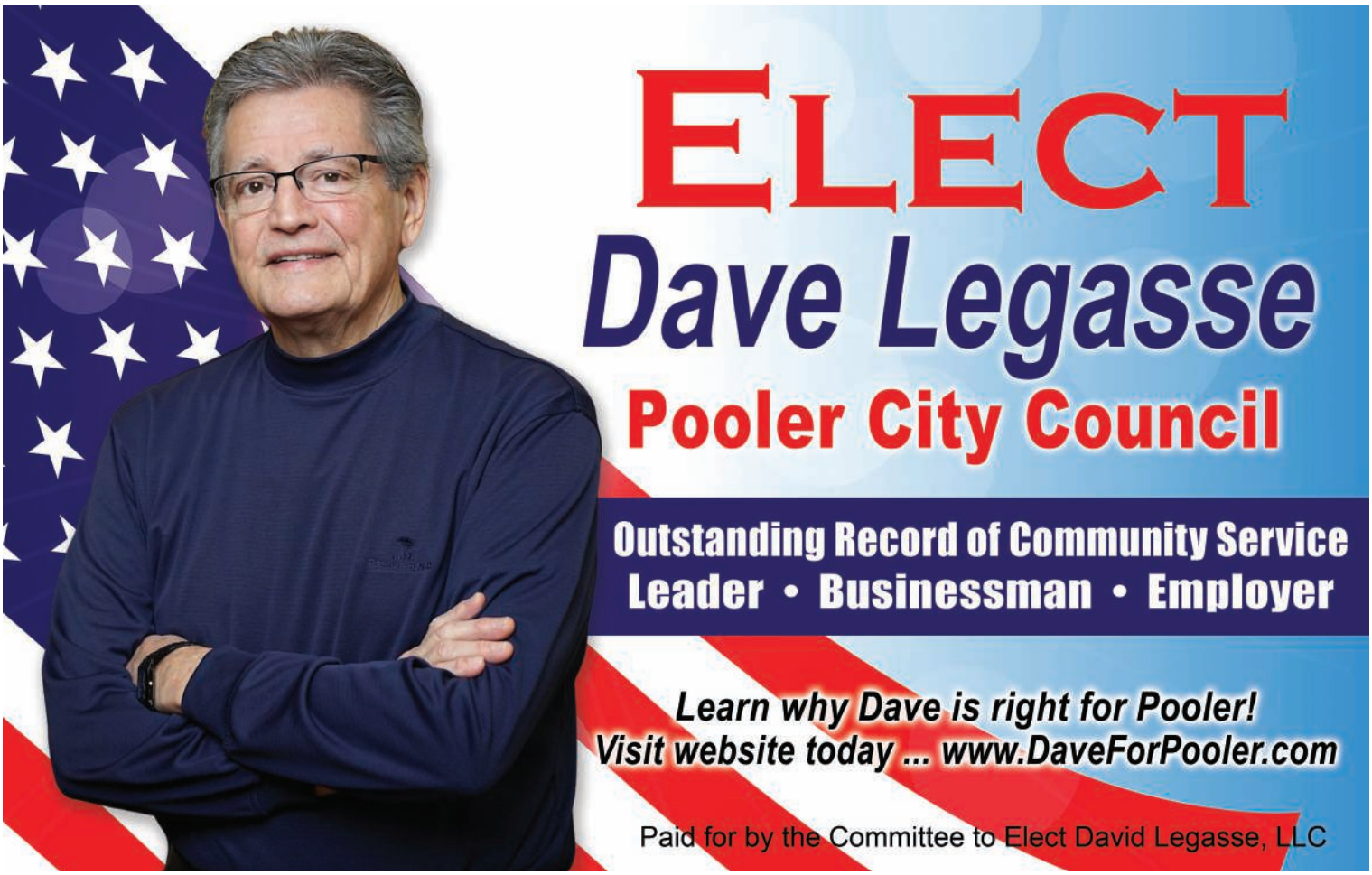
3D mammography combines multiple images of the breast to create a full three-dimensional view, which makes it ideal for spotting abnormalities at an early stage. Pooler Imaging has a Hologic Dimensions 3D Mammography unit that utilizes the Affirm Biopsy Guidance System and the Brevera Breast Biopsy System to provide a complete tomosynthesis mammography experience to every patient, every time. Together, the state-of-the-art equipment allows for a quick and streamlined process for patient care.

Other procedures include:

- MRI
- MR Angiography
- CT
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- Stereotactic Guided Breast Biopsies
- X-Ray
- Ultrasound
- Ultrasound Guided Thyroid Fine Needle Aspiration
- Ultrasound Guided Breast Biopsies

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With a passion for high-quality patient care, Pooler Imaging Center is staffed by technologists who create a compassionate environment for patient care, offering options like sedation when necessary to ease anxiety. When you call, you're certain to get a real person on the phone.




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BADCOCK HOME FURNITURE & MORE
Rincon and Pooler Locations

Welcome to the **Badcock Home Furniture & More** Rincon and Pooler store locations, where they love helping their customers make their house a home. "From your shopping experience to your delivery experience, we give our customers the best experience possible by delivering high quality products and putting our customers' needs first," says Jeremy Nease, owner of both stores.

Nease purchased the Rincon Badcock Home Furniture & More in 2011. He successfully grew the customer base, in fact it tripled in eight years, which led him to open his second store in 2019.

"We built the 15,600 square foot stand alone Pooler store from the ground up," says Nease. "Both our stores are one stop shopping for everything you could need for your home, from recliners to mattresses. We have superior quality with extremely competitive prices ensuring you will get the best deal possible with us."

For Every Room in the House

At Badcock it is easy to cost effectively transform your bedroom, living room, or dining room into a beautiful space you and your family will love. Their vast selection includes:

- Sofas (sectionals, sleepers), chairs, recliners
- Dining room sets, bar stools
- Bedroom suites, separate pieces, mattresses for all size beds
- Kitchen and laundry appliances
- TVs, computers, home theaters
- Rugs, lamps, wall decor, decorative pillows

Spring Savings

Spring is the perfect time to freshen up your home! From new sofas to bright accent pieces, Badcock has it all. Revamp your living room or bring in new kitchen appliances. Create an inviting outdoor living space complete with a new grill (gas or charcoal)—and keep your yard beautiful with their selection of lawn equipment. And Nease says, "with the vast majority in stock, no waiting months here!"

Utilize your tax refund by investing in your home or take advantage of Badcock's in-house financing. Badcock Home Furniture & More offers affordable payment plans just right for every customer. They make it stress free to apply for credit with in-house financing that works for you. Check it out and see how easy it is!

Winning Team

"Our team is here for you," says Nease. "They all go above and beyond to give every customer the best possible outcome, from product selection to home delivery."

The team is led by General Manager Bobby Heath, Theresa Davis, Rincon Store Manager and Dezi White, Pooler Store Manager.

"Our stores provide customers with the style of home furnishings they want, at prices they love, by friendly sales associates, in an atmosphere that allows them to picture the furniture in their own home," says Nease. "Come in and check out our products in person."

About W.S. Badcock Corporation

W.S. Badcock Corporation, a subsidiary of Franchise Group Inc. (NASDAQ: FRG), is a southeastern home furnishings company headquartered in Mulberry, Fla. Founded in 1904, its branded Badcock Home Furniture & More retail chain has grown to more than 380 corporate and associate dealer stores across eight states. Badcock carries a complete line of furniture, appliances, bedding, electronics, home office furnishing, accessories and seasonal items while offering payment plans just right for its customers.

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National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force

Story by Jane Grismer

The National Museum of the Mighty Eighth Air Force's 2023 conducted their third annual "Flags for the Fallen" Memorial Day weekend of remembrance and reflection. Approximately 300 community volunteers descended on the Museum to place the 26,000 WWII Era 48 Star flags throughout the Memorial Garden, one for each of the Eighth Air Force young Americans who never returned home.

In the three years, the Museum's signature community engagement event has become one of the most powerful and moving visual reminders in our country of what Memorial Day represents. This year the City of Pooler combined its annual Memorial Day Service with the Museum, highlighted by comments from the Mayor Rebecca C. Benton and other representatives.

The highlight was placing the last three flags in the Memorial Garden by three WWII Eighth Air Force Veterans. Centurions, Lucky Luckadoo, Gordon Fenwick, and Jerry Rasmussen placed and saluted the last three American flags symbolizing the official opening of the 2023 Memorial Garden.

Leading this year's Museum Flags for the Fallen team as M/C was Chatham County Veteran of the Year Greg Kindred, who has been associated with the Flags for the Fallen team since its inception.

In addition, 350 family and friends of the 100th Bomb Group Foundation conducted their bi-annual reunion at the Museum over the Memorial Day weekend. Their membership placed the 757 flags for those killed in service in the 100th BG during WWII. Ten Active Duty USAF personnel from the 100th Air Refueling Wing traveled from their base in the UK to be part of the weekend's events.

The Flags for the Fallen team remains committed to returning the Memorial to Memorial Day for all Americans.





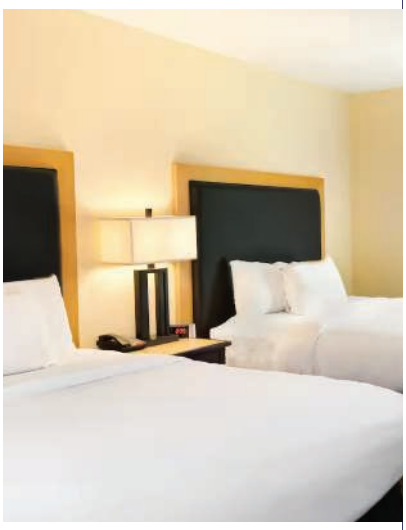
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July 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23 30	24 31	25	26	27	28	29

August 2023

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

POOLER EVENTS

7/4: 4th of July Fireworks Cruise
8pm | Savannah Riverboat Cruises

7/8: Celebrating Weaving Traditions Workshop
11am - 1pm | Savannah African Art Museum

7/8 - 7/9: Telfair Children's Art Museum Grand Opening
Jepson Center | 207 W York St., Savannah

7/12: Save our Summer Blood Drive
2 - 7pm | 41 Martin Luther King Jr. Blvd. Savannah

7/17 - 7/21: Summer Soccer Camp
Pooler Recreation
900 S Rogers Street, Pooler

7/21: Red Hot Chilli Pepper Race
6:15 - 8:15pm | JF Gregory Park, Richmond Hill

7/24: Mobile Mammograms
Chatham Co. Health Department
1395 Eisenhower Dr. Savannah

7/29: Back to School Block Rock
4 - 6pm | Civic Center Arena, Savannah

7/29: Annual 5k Friendship Fun Run
7am | 200 Tanger Outlet Blvd., Pooler

7/29 - 7/30: Savannah Comic- Con
10am - 5pm | Savannah Convention Center

8/4: Feed the Poor Food Packing
9am - 4pm | St. Vincent's Academy, Savannah

8/8: Kiwanis Club of Pooler-West Chatham
9am- 4am
Queensborough National Bank & Trust, Pooler

8/12: Celebrating Weaving Traditions Workshop
11am - 1pm | Carnegie Library
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