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WEST OF FREE PRESS

TAKING THE HIT

The closing of West Ashley
Hardware raises a bigger question
about what a community
loses when its neighborhood
businesses disappear

... See story on pages 8



Also inside ...

Home Team BBQ Turns 20, Green Levels at Magnolia, Exploring West Ashley Coffee Shops ... and more!



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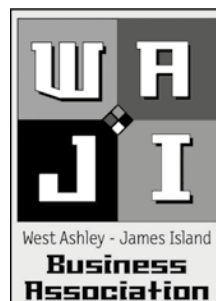
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NEWS

“Having reliable, up-to-date equipment enhances our ability to protect lives and better serve our community as they participate in our programs.”

— Joshua Singleton, St. Andrew's Parks Legacy Foundation. President,

A Lifesaving Upgrade

\$11,000 grant helps St. Andrew's Parks replace aging AEDs at West Ashley facilities

from Staff Reports

From youth sports and summer camps to fitness classes and senior programs, thousands of West Ashley residents make use of St. Andrew's Parks and Playground facilities each year. A new grant will help make sure staff members have potentially lifesaving equipment nearby if a medical emergency occurs.

The St. Andrew's Parks Legacy Foundation recently received an \$11,000 grant from the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation to purchase new automated external defibrillators, commonly known as AEDs.

The new units will replace aging equipment and be placed at strategic locations throughout St. Andrew's Parks and Playground facilities.

AEDs are portable devices designed to help someone experiencing sudden cardiac arrest by analyzing the heart's rhythm and, when necessary, delivering an electrical shock to help restore a normal rhythm. Having one readily accessible can be particularly important in recreation settings, where people of all ages are participating in sports and other physical activities.

“We are extremely grateful to the Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation and our local Firehouse Subs West Ashley restaurant for this vital support,” said Joshua Singleton, president of the St. Andrew's Parks Legacy Foundation. “Having reliable, up-to-date equipment enhances our ability to protect lives and better serve our community as they participate in our programs.”

The grant also represents an early success for the St. Andrew's Parks Legacy Foundation, a nonprofit organization established in 2025 to provide additional support for the programs and facilities



operated by St. Andrew's Parks and Playground.

While the foundation itself is relatively new, the organization it supports has deep roots in West Ashley. Founded in 1945, St. Andrew's Parks and Playground is the oldest active parks district in South Carolina and has provided recreation opportunities to generations of local residents.

The Legacy Foundation was created to help strengthen those programs and facilities while preserving resources for

future generations.

The Firehouse Subs Public Safety Foundation was established in 2005 by the founders of the restaurant chain with a mission of providing equipment and other resources to first responders and public safety organizations. The foundation also supports prevention education, scholarships and continuing education, disaster relief, and military veterans.

Since its creation, the organization has awarded more than 7,200 grants totaling

more than \$109 million to public safety organizations across all 50 states and Puerto Rico. More than 70 percent of the money raised by the foundation comes from donations made by Firehouse Subs customers and the restaurant brand.

For St. Andrew's Parks, its latest grant will remain much closer to home, putting updated emergency equipment in the places where West Ashley residents play, exercise, compete, and gather.

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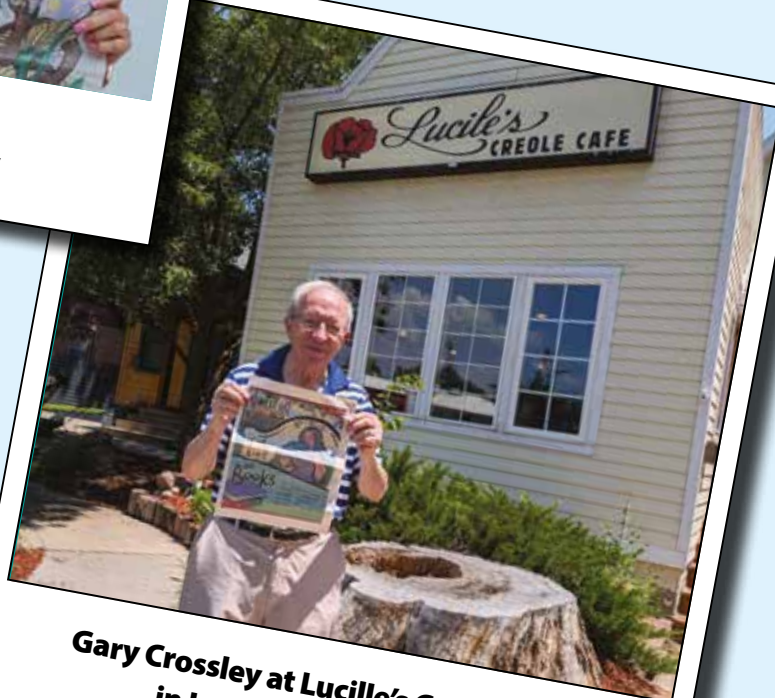
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Taking a Hit

The closing of West Ashley Hardware raises a bigger question about what a community loses when its businesses disappear

by Lorne Chambers | Editor

When Waylon Cain talks about the role of a hardware store, he goes back much further than West Ashley Hardware, the store he owned and operated for nearly a decade.

In the earliest American towns, Cain points out, the general store was often the center of commerce. In the towns of the Old West, before shopping centers, big-box retailers, and online delivery, it was where people bought what they needed, but also where neighbors crossed paths, exchanged news, asked for advice, and maintained the small connections that helped turn a cluster of houses and businesses into a community.

Cain sees a neighborhood hardware store as a descendant of that tradition.

For nearly a decade, West Ashley Hardware filled that role from its home on the corner of Wappoo and Ashley River roads. Cain opened the store in October 2016, after his mother had opened a hardware store on Edisto Island several years earlier. He had grown up around tradespeople and was the guy folks called when something needed fixing.

"I got into it because I was the friend who always fixed everybody's stuff," Cain said.

Over the years, West Ashley Hardware became a place to buy nuts, bolts, tools, paint, plumbing supplies, and all the other things one expects to find in a hardware store. But Cain says the real business was helping people.

He said he learned early on to listen to the tradesmen who came through his doors. In doing so, he learned a lot more than a pro tip on how to fix a leaky faucet or properly hang a door.

"They told me about their tragedies, their wins, we talked about their wives, their husbands, their kids," he said.

One of his favorite memories goes back to the store's early days, when a young father

came in around Christmastime with his child and a Power Wheels toy that wasn't working. The kid was upset, and rather than simply sell the father a part or send them somewhere else, the employees gathered around the Power Wheels and started troubleshooting it together. Cain compared the scene to doctors gathered around an operating table in an ER performing surgery. Eventually, they got it working again, and, in Cain's words, had it "running like a Ferrari."

There were stranger emergencies, too, including actual surgery. Cain recalled the time a fisherman showed up with a large shark hook stuck through the meaty part of his hand. They clipped off the barb and pulled the hook back through.

"When I asked him why he didn't go to the hospital, he told me, 'I don't trust doctors,'" Cain recalled. He trusted the local hardware store.

Of course, the hardware store is also where people go when preparing for a natural disaster, like a hurricane or snowstorm, or to repair things following those storms. During the pandemic, people turned to West Ashley Hardware for various things as home projects moved from the back burner to the front while people were not going into the office or to social gatherings.

"When chaos happens, we're the first place they come to," said Cain.

That ended last month when West Ashley Hardware closed its doors for good.

And while West Ashley lost a place to buy hardware, it also lost something harder to replace.

That is why the final days hit him harder than he expected.

"I've never cried more in my life than on Saturday," he said days after shuttering the store. "The two best things I have are my employees and my customers," he said.

Cain made sure all 11 of his employees had jobs lined up before the store closed. He described the staff not simply as employees, but as a family, one in which everyone left a mark on the place.

MORE THAN A TRANSACTION

Jordan Amaker, Director of Advocacy and Communications for Lowcountry Local First (LLF), says the value of neighborhood businesses can be difficult to quantify because much of it exists outside the transaction happening at the cash register.

When one closes, she said, a community loses "a sense of community."

"Oftentimes, it's a 'third place.' It's the neighborhood-serving places. It's the

reason you pick where you live," Amaker said.

"This has been a hub for people who wouldn't see each other anywhere else," said Cain.

There is an economic loss as well, explained Amaker. Independent businesses tend to purchase services from other local businesses, hire locally, and circulate money through the local economy. When one disappears, some of that circulation disappears with it.

And replacing it with another independent business is far from guaranteed.

"The odds of a local business going into that space are not high," Amaker said.

That presents an increasingly complicated challenge for organizations like LLF, which has spent years encouraging consumers to support locally-owned businesses.

The message still matters. But Amaker said consumer behavior is only part of the equation.

"It gets harder and harder to do that when there is more and more convenience available to us," she said.

In other words, the answer cannot simply be to tell consumers to do better.

"It's not a 'shop local harder' issue," Amaker said.

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... continued from page 8

THE PRICE OF SUCCESS

It's a familiar pattern we see in many established neighborhoods: The qualities that make a place desirable can eventually make it more difficult for the small businesses that helped create that desirability to remain there. It has happened on King Street downtown and in parts of Mount Pleasant. It is happening in communities across the country.

Amaker said commercial leases are an increasingly important part of the conversation when discussing small-business closures. More and more, we're seeing property being valued not for what it's worth today, but for what could potentially be built there tomorrow.

David Desplaces, a professor of strategic management and entrepreneurship at The Citadel's Tommy and Victoria Baker School of Business, sees a danger in assuming that every business closure is evidence of a failed business.

"What you have here is a place that was successful and was part of the DNA of the community," Desplaces said of West Ashley Hardware.

Desplaces emphasizes that closure shouldn't be synonymous with business failure.

"The common myth is that nine out of 10 small businesses fail. That's not true. They don't fail. They choose to close for a variety of reasons," said Desplaces.

Increasingly, the forces determining whether an independent business survives may have less to do with whether customers love it and more to do with real estate, commercial leases, access to capital, redevelopment, and public policy.

That distinction is important in the case of West Ashley Hardware.

Cain is adamant that there was no single culprit behind his decision. The final straw was a massive increase in his occupancy costs, driven not by a traditional rent hike but by rising property taxes and insurance costs that, under the terms of his lease, were passed along to the tenant. So while his base rent did not technically increase, his monthly nut skyrocketed along with the value of the property.

"The reason I closed was not because of the tax increase," Cain clarified. "There were about 20-plus variables that I could not control. I tried."

The loss of West Ashley Hardware also illustrates the difference between a neighborhood business and the much larger retailer that may sell many of the same products.

Big-box stores are built around volume and efficiency, Desplaces explained. A small hardware store can compete in a different way: through expertise, relationships, and helping a customer solve a problem that might require a 79-cent part rather than a \$300 purchase.

CAN A CITY PROTECT ITS SMALL BUSINESSES?

The challenge facing West Ashley is not unique. Many growing suburban centers across the country are wrestling with how to preserve independent businesses

without freezing neighborhoods in time.

Eric Pohlman, the City of Charleston's West Ashley Project Coordinator for Planning, Preservation, and Sustainability, says that despite the closing of the only independent hardware store in West Ashley, the community continues to have a strong local economy.

"One thing that always gets brought up is, 'We need more local business in West Ashley,'" Pohlman said. "But we do have a very thriving local business operation throughout West Ashley."

Beyond storefronts and brick-and-mortar operations, Pohlman points to many tradespeople and entrepreneurs who operate businesses from their homes in West Ashley as a vital part of that local economy.

Pohlman regularly works with Lowcountry Local First and commercial brokers to connect local businesses with available spaces. The city has also put more emphasis on helping businesses navigate the permitting process.

Pohlman described the role as being a "Sherpa for the permit center," helping entrepreneurs obtain the correct permits and avoid unnecessary delays.

"Time is money," he said.

But permitting assistance does not solve the larger problem of affordability.

Pohlman said one idea he would like Charleston to explore more aggressively is treating affordable commercial space as something akin to affordable housing.

"When we get planned unit developments coming forward, we already have affordable housing in there now," he said. "How about we have affordable commercial for that, too?"

Amaker suggests formula-based overlays, which can be used to regulate concentrations of standardized chain businesses in particular districts. This has worked in smaller areas like Folly Beach or Sullivan's Island. Amaker pointed to other tools used around the country, including community benefit agreements negotiated as part of major developments. Such agreements can establish goals for local hiring, local businesses, and different tiers of commercial rent.

The point, advocates say, is not to eliminate national retailers.

Pohlman envisions a future West Ashley with "a mix of local, regional, and national brands that the community comes together and supports."

His particular focus is the Sam Rittenberg Boulevard corridor, including the ongoing transformation around Citadel Mall and the possibility of eventually breathing new life into aging shopping centers such as Village Square.

"Sam Ritt is my focus," he said. "It's the heart of West Ashley, with the potential to have lots of different little pockets all along it."

A SMALL-BUSINESS DESERT

Desplaces believes policymakers should consider the cumulative effect of losing independent businesses rather than viewing each closure in isolation.

"We're familiar with the idea of food deserts," he said. "Well, we're trending toward small-business deserts."

Desplaces does not argue that every business should be independent. Larger retailers can serve as anchors, providing



products, jobs, and services that communities need. A vibrant commercial district, he said, requires balance.

"We should have anchors. It's good to have them in vibrant communities, but it requires a balance," he said.

Stores like Lowe's or Home Depot aren't inherently the problem, Desplaces said. The problem arises when the commercial ecosystem reaches a point where those are the only viable hardware retailers.

"Policies need to be enacted to preserve the balance and number of small businesses so we can preserve the fabric of the community," he said.

The real question Desplaces seems to be asking is whether market forces alone can maintain that balance without some guidance from the powers that be.

Amaker believes municipalities do have policy levers available to them. Desplaces similarly argues that policymakers need to consider the identities of individual commercial districts and what residents want those places to become.

That may be especially important in West Ashley, a part of Charleston experiencing significant redevelopment while still holding onto pockets of an older suburban and small-town identity.

"I always hear about people feeling guilty for using Amazon. But it's not your fault that Amazon is Amazon," she said, arguing that public policy has helped create an environment in which small businesses are increasingly asked to compete on an uneven playing field.

Even still, Cain said the experience of owning West Ashley Hardware was ultimately positive.

"I don't regret doing it. If I could do it over, I'd do it again," he said, adding that he would even consider opening another hardware store if the circumstances were right, particularly if he could own the building rather than be vulnerable to forces outside his control.

Cain also hopes someone else will eventually operate an independent hardware store in West Ashley.

"People who run hardware stores do it because they love helping people get stuff done," Cain said.

And that's what he will miss most. It's the customers who stopped in even when they didn't need much. The employees who gathered around a child's broken Power Wheels at Christmas. The tradespeople who shared their knowledge. The people who came through the door having a bad day and left feeling a little better.

"It's a family," Cain said.

And after spending a decade building that family, closing the doors left him with an unexpected sense that he had walked away from something much larger than a business.

"What I'll miss most is the people," Cain said. "I feel like I just abandoned a whole family."

As West Ashley continues to grow and redevelop, the community faces a choice about what kind of place it wants to become.

Despite the closing of his store, Cain believes there's still hope for West Ashley to preserve some of what made places like his store possible in the first place.

"It's not too late," Cain said. "The opportunity is still there to keep West Ashley a small-town environment."

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The following were taken from actual incident reports filed last month by the City of Charleston Police Department. These are not convictions and the names of businesses, complainants, and suspects have been left out to protect the innocent. All suspects are innocent until proven guilty ... of course.

AUGUST 1 BLACKMAIL

An Ashley Town Center Drive resident contacted police after an apparent phishing scam escalated into attempted blackmail. The man initially received a fraudulent email invitation from a friend's hacked account, followed by repeated attempts to access his Gmail. The next day, he began receiving texts containing private photographs apparently taken from his Snapchat memories or camera roll, along with threats that the images would be posted publicly. The man blocked the number before the sender made any specific demands.

AUGUST 1 BOMB THREAT

Police responded to a Savannah Highway fast-food restaurant after a disgruntled drive-through customer allegedly threatened to return and bomb the business. An employee told police the man's order was unavailable because the restaurant had been experiencing problems with its drive-through system after a power outage. During the ensuing argument, the customer allegedly made racist remarks and threatened to return and "bomb it." The employee told officers the man was a regular customer and that surveillance footage should be available.

AUGUST 2 AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

A birthday gathering at an Ashley River Road apartment complex ended with two people facing charges and one suffering a broken collarbone. Police said an argument erupted after one partygoer began breaking items inside the apartment, including a PlayStation 5. During the ensuing confrontation, another person admitted kicking and striking the woman, who later allegedly threw a bottle and used a fire extinguisher to damage the apartment's front door. Both were charged following the incident.

AUGUST 3 SIMPLE ASSAULT

Police responded to the area of Arlington Drive and Rondo Street after a man reported that his son had punched him in the jaw. Officers observed swelling to the man's jaw and noted that his shirt appeared stretched following the confrontation. He declined medical treatment. Police documented the

incident, but much of the description of what led to the altercation was redacted from the report.

AUGUST 3 AGGRAVATED ASSAULT

Police were called to a West Ashley hospital after a patient arrived with a stab wound. Investigators determined the stabbing occurred at an Ashley River Road apartment complex and responded there to investigate. Detectives and crime scene personnel were called to assist, and the case remains under investigation.

AUGUST 3 PUBLIC INTOXICATION

A man was arrested after police reportedly spotted him opening business mailboxes, yelling at a chair, and kicking at the air near Savannah Highway and Melrose Drive. Officers had encountered the same man earlier after receiving reports that he was causing a disturbance and kicking cardboard boxes. Police said he smelled strongly of alcohol and had bloodshot eyes. He was arrested for public intoxication and transported to the Al Cannon Detention Center.

AUGUST 3 WEAPON VIOLATION

A woman contacted police after reportedly seeing someone retrieve a handgun from a vehicle and begin waving it around during an argument at a Hazelwood Drive apartment complex. She told officers she did not know what the dispute was about and could provide few additional details about the firearm. The woman initially reported the incident to apartment management before being instructed to contact police.

AUGUST 5 CHECK FRAUD

A Charleston man reported that a \$1,256 check intended to pay his credit card bill was apparently stolen and altered after being mailed from a West Ashley post office. The man discovered the check had been duplicated with an unknown person's name substituted as the recipient while retaining the original amount. After reporting the fraudulent transaction to his bank, he was advised to file a police report.

AUGUST 6 DISORDERLY CONDUCT

Police arrested a woman after receiving reports of someone waving at traffic, exposing herself, and banging on cars near Paul Cantrell Boulevard and Magwood Drive. Officers located the woman riding a bicycle and said she continued for about a quarter mile despite a patrol car following with its lights and siren activated. Police described her behavior as erratic and said she smelled of alcohol. She was arrested for disorderly conduct after officers determined she was impaired.

AUGUST 6 ASSAULT ON POLICE

A reportedly intoxicated man who refused to leave an Ashley River Road apartment took his displeasure out on responding officers, according to police. After being detained, the man allegedly spit into one officer's mouth and eyes, then found a gap in a patrol car partition and spit on another officer's shoulder. During the ride to jail, he allegedly threatened to

kill one of the officers. He was charged with trespassing, two counts of throwing bodily fluids, and threatening a public official.

AUGUST 7 DRUG TRAFFICKING

A suspicious vehicle encountered in the parking lot of a Savannah Highway hotel led to a brief foot chase and multiple drug charges. Police said a man fled before being detained and subsequently charged with trafficking cocaine, trafficking crack cocaine, simple possession of marijuana, and resisting arrest.

AUGUST 9 ANIMAL CRUELTY

A welfare check at an Etiwan Avenue apartment led police to what they described as uninhabitable conditions, including trash and animal feces covering the floors and a decaying cat lying on a table. Officers also found a flea-covered dog that had reportedly been left alone inside. An animal control officer later discovered a dead pet rat in a cage upstairs. The dog was evaluated, and the deceased cat was removed as the investigation continued.

AUGUST 10 BURGLARY

A construction manager discovered approximately \$6,000 in damage at a home under construction on Queenview Lane. Police said someone apparently entered the vacant house, opened a rear door, and aimed backyard sprinklers inside, flooding the living area and causing an estimated \$4,800 in flooring damage. Two interior windowpanes were also broken, and an unexplained red streak resembling paint was found on the front of the house. Crime scene investigators responded to document the damage.

AUGUST 10 SIMPLE ASSAULT

An EMS worker reported being assaulted while transporting a patient to a West Ashley hospital. According to police, the patient became agitated inside the moving ambulance, ripped at restraints, grabbed the EMS worker's arms, pushed her, and attempted to reach for her radio. She was able to restrain him until hospital security could assist upon arrival. Police documented a scratch on her arm, and she told officers she wanted to pursue charges.

AUGUST 13 SIMPLE ASSAULT

Police responded to an Ashley Hall Plantation Road apartment complex after a fight at a playground ended with one participant suffering a seizure. Witnesses gave conflicting accounts about who threw the first punch, but agreed the two people punched each other and pulled each other's hair before bystanders separated them. Police said the parties had a history of physical altercations. Without video or consistent witness accounts, officers could not determine who initiated the fight.

AUGUST 13 ANIMAL CRUELTY

A domestic rabbit was discovered abandoned behind a Dogwood Road apartment building inside a small animal enclosure containing food, water, treats, and a rabbit-care guide. Apartment management told police rabbits were prohibited under

the property's leases and said inspections had recently begun, leading them to suspect someone may have put the animal outside to avoid discovery. The apparently healthy rabbit was taken to the Charleston Animal Society while police investigated its ownership.

AUGUST 13 INTIMIDATION

A woman contacted police after a meal-delivery driver allegedly threatened to kill her and a maintenance worker. The woman said the driver had previously made her uncomfortable by entering her Marvin Avenue home, asking about her finances, and requesting cigarettes and drinks. She had already asked the organization to send someone else. According to the report, the driver later returned and allegedly threatened to get a gun, kill the maintenance worker and the woman, and spend the rest of his life in prison.

AUGUST 15 ANIMAL CRUELTY

Police cited a man after his dog was found locked inside a vehicle in the parking lot of an Ashley Town Center Drive warehouse store on a day when the heat index reached 113 degrees. The windows were reportedly open only a few inches, and witnesses said the dog was visibly panting and showing possible early signs of heat distress. Firefighters were attempting to open the vehicle when the owner returned about 20 minutes later and said he "didn't think he would be inside that long."

AUGUST 16 SIMPLE ASSAULT

A dispute over modifying a chair ended with an arrest at an Ashley Hall Road apartment complex. A man told police his roommate became angry after he said he did not have a saw to remove the arms from a chair, then allegedly threw the wooden chair in his direction. The man managed to move before being struck. According to police, the roommate admitted throwing the chair and acknowledged it would have hit the man had he not moved. He was arrested for assault.

AUGUST 18 HARASSING COMMUNICATIONS

A West Ashley woman reported receiving repeated calls, threats, and messages after private intimate photographs and videos were allegedly obtained from a former partner's phone and circulated without her consent. She told police the harassment involved multiple people and continued despite her blocking their numbers. According to the report, some messages confirmed that the private images were being shared within a group. The woman preserved call logs, voicemails, text messages, and other records as evidence.

AUGUST 22 DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A man reported being struck in the back of the head during a domestic dispute at a Dunbarton Drive neighborhood pool. According to police, the man said he stopped to avoid stepping on the woman's sunglasses after they fell from her head. As he walked past her, she allegedly punched him from behind. Officers did not observe any visible injuries. The man told police he primarily wanted the incident documented for court purposes.



A&E

“Something about picking up an instrument and performing for an audience helps the day-to-day stressors disappear into the background for a bit.”

— Elliott Genther, *The Green Levels*

Still Picking After All These Years

The Green Levels bring nearly two decades of music to Magnolia’s Bluegrass, BBQ & Brews

by Lorne Chambers | Editor

For nearly two decades, The Green Levels have been picking their way through Charleston’s changing musical landscape, playing everything from bars and weddings to private parties and some of the Lowcountry’s most scenic venues.

On Saturday, Sept. 26, the longtime Charleston bluegrass band will provide the soundtrack for an afternoon of barbecue and beer beneath the oaks at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens during Bluegrass, BBQ & Brews.

The event, held from 1-4 p.m., pairs smoked meats and local craft beer tastings with live music from a band that has spent the better part of 20 years putting its own spin on bluegrass and Americana.

“We started as a bar band around 2008, playing both covers and original songs,” said Elliott Genther, mandolin player and founding member of The Green Levels. “This quickly evolved into playing a lot of weddings, corporate events, and private parties.”

But calling The Green Levels simply a bluegrass band doesn’t quite tell the story.

“We have never been a straight-ahead bluegrass band,” Genther said. “We lean into that genre but found our niche by pulling inspiration from a wide variety of genres and decades and making them our own.”

That can mean playing traditional songs in decidedly nontraditional ways, or taking something audiences would never expect to hear from an acoustic string band and giving it The Green Levels treatment.

“There is no right or wrong way to approach folk music,” Genther said. “We try to play tunes in a way that feels natural to us rather than mimic how we heard it somewhere else.”

The band itself has evolved, too. Over



the years, The Green Levels have built an extended roster of musicians who join them for different performances, allowing the group to expand its repertoire and adapt to different crowds and settings.

That versatility has helped the band endure in a Charleston music scene that looks considerably different than it did when The Green Levels started playing around town in 2008.

“Charleston has always been a music-friendly town. Live music is part of this city’s DNA,” Genther said. “While the city has grown measurably, we’re lucky that our rootsy sound has remained marketable for so long, and are grateful that it seems to fit for so many different types of audiences and occasions.”

And despite Charleston’s growth, Genther said the community of musicians behind

that scene has maintained much of its old familiarity.

“The community of musicians here is a close-knit one, and always has been,” he said. “No matter how much the city has grown, it’s still small enough to where we often cross paths with other musicians we cut our teeth with along the way. We root each other on.”

After 18 years of gigs, rehearsals, changing audiences, and changing lives, Genther said the reason to keep playing remains fairly simple.

“It might sound cliché, but I think music is medicine for us,” he said. “We have busy lives, just like everyone else. Something about picking up an instrument and performing for an audience helps the day-to-day stressors disappear into the background for a bit.”

Experience has also brought a certain confidence.

“We’ve tightened up our sound a lot over the last 18 years, and have become really consistent,” Genther said. “There are always those special gigs where everything is clicking and we feel unstoppable. There’s nothing more satisfying than that.”

Bluegrass, BBQ & Brews should offer a fitting setting for one of those gigs.

The Sept. 26 event includes samples of three smoked meats and three sides, a dessert sampling, six beer tastings, admission to Magnolia, and live music from The Green Levels. Tickets are \$75 through Sept. 4, then increase to \$85 on Sept. 5. Ticket sales close on Sept. 12.

For those who come for the barbecue and beer but haven’t encountered The Green Levels during the band’s long run around Charleston, Genther said they shouldn’t expect the musicians to simply work their way through a predetermined set list.

“While you might be listening to us, we’re listening to you as well,” he said. “We are always tuning in to what’s working, what’s not, and what might just turn an event into a memorable one for our audience.”

There is, however, one guarantee.

“You should expect to hear some acoustic music, three-part harmonies, and some rippin’ solos,” says Genther.

Bluegrass, BBQ & Brews will be held on Saturday, Sept. 26, from 1-4 p.m. at Magnolia Plantation and Gardens, located at 3550 Ashley River Road. \$75 through Sept. 4; \$85 beginning Sept. 5. Ticket sales close Sept. 12. For more info or to purchase tickets, visit www.magnoliaplantation.com/events/bluegrass-bbq-and-brews.

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Diggin' Deep

Deep Crates Charleston celebrates five years
of keeping vinyl spinning

by Lorne Chambers | Editor

In an age when virtually any song ever recorded is just a few taps away, a group of Charleston music lovers is still doing things the old-fashioned way: digging through crates, dropping needles, and letting records play.

Deep Crates Charleston celebrates its fifth anniversary Friday, Sept. 4, with an all-vinyl night and record show at Tin Roof in West Ashley.

What began as Charleston native Fred Schwuchow's 45th birthday party has evolved into a monthly gathering of DJs, record collectors, vendors, artists, and music fans. Better known behind the turntables as DJ Thematik, Schwuchow is a longtime b-boy, graffiti artist, and DJ who originally saw the party as one last spin before stepping away.

"Funny enough, my 45th birthday party was also my unofficial retirement party," Schwuchow said. "But we had such a good turnout and so much fun, Tin Roof asked us to make it a monthly night."

Deep Crates quickly grew beyond an excuse for Schwuchow and some old friends to get together once a month. He persuaded several DJs to come out of retirement with him while also giving others their first opportunity to perform in front of an audience.

Within a few months, DJs from New York were asking to participate while their own city remained under pandemic restrictions. Deep Crates began inviting record vendors, and similar vinyl nights soon began appearing around Charleston.

Five years later, Deep Crates bills itself as Charleston's longest-running vinyl night, featuring a rotating roster of local DJs alongside guests from Iceland, the Philippines, New York, Philadelphia, Atlanta, and North Carolina. It has also expanded to pop-up events at venues across Charleston.

Since its beginning, Deep Crates has served as the official DJ crew for the North Charleston Record Show at the Keith Summey North Charleston Library, formerly held at The Sparrow as the Park Circle Record Show. Those events have helped the crew develop relationships with record stores and vendors throughout the area.

For its anniversary, Deep Crates is going bigger with its first full-fledged record show. Seven vendors are scheduled to

bring LPs, 12-inch singles, and 45s, along with vintage clothing, collectibles, and art. Schwuchow said guests can expect "some great finds and amazing deals, as well as some awesome music."

That physical experience remains an essential part of vinyl's appeal, even as digital music has made listening easier than ever.

"There's nothing like holding an album in your hands, the smell of the cardboard and vinyl, the artwork, the liner notes, the sound of the needle hitting the groove," Schwuchow said. "You don't get that with any other format."

Schwuchow enjoys the convenience of digital music but said it can make it easy for listeners to fall into familiar routines or simply play whatever is popular. Digging through records encourages discovery and pushes DJs to think beyond the obvious choices.

Vinyl also demands more from the person behind the turntables.

"There is no auto-sync with vinyl," he said. "So when you see a DJ playing records, you know they're actually doing something."

The anniversary lineup includes DJs Riggle, Mosaic, Thematik, Paul Got Records, Doc Circles, and Jesse Lockman, spinning hip-hop, funk, soul, jazz, disco, classic rock,

breakbeats, and more. Vinny's Steaks & Burgers will provide food.

**Deep Crates Charleston's fifth-
anniversary celebration runs from
7-11:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 4, at Tin Roof,
1117 Magnolia Road.**



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DINING

"It's amazing looking back at the team of people we've put together over the years. The people who have really built their own lives under our roof."

— Aaron Siegel, founder/owner/pitmaster Home Team BBQ

Home Field Advantage

20 years since opening in West Ashley, Home Team BBQ owner Aaron Siegel reflects on how it all began

by Lorne Chambers | Editor

It's a little late for the weekday lunch rush, but Home Team BBQ in West Ashley is packed. While waiting to be seated, I peruse the menu as if I don't already have it memorized. As if I might get something other than the Reuben. It's a Thursday, after all, which means it's Pit-smoked Pastrami Day, and Home Team's Reuben is one of my favorite sandwiches in all of Charleston.

I spot my lunch guest, none other than Aaron "Fiery Ron" Siegel, founder/owner/pitmaster of the ever-expanding Home Team BBQ empire. I shoot him a wave, and we settle into a table at the back half of the restaurant, in the part that used to be a hair salon and, before that, a mattress store. Several years ago, Home Team expanded its West Ashley footprint by taking over the neighboring space to allow for more seating. They removed the stage where there had once been live music and knocked out the wall so the space could accommodate more diners.

Actually, Home Team's footprint has expanded quite a bit since it first opened here 20 years ago. It's grown into far more than the next room. There are now six Home Team BBQ restaurants around the state (West Ashley, Downtown, Mount Pleasant, Sullivan's Island, Columbia, and Greenville) as well as one in Aspen, Col. But it all started right here in a former service station along Ashley River Road in West Ashley.

"This is the place I take the most pride in" says Siegel as we reflect on 20 years of making some of the best barbecue in the region, garnering accolades such as *Southern Living's* "Top 50 BBQ Joints in the South" and "Most Life-Changing Ribs in America" by *Esquire*.

Three years after opening its original West Ashley location, Home Team Sullivan's Island opened and the rest is history.

"Managing one or two restaurants is nothing like managing seven," Siegel admits. But he seems to have found the

sweet spot, the work-life balance that is so elusive to new business owners, particularly restaurant owners. "We've all grown up. We're a lot wiser than we were back then."

Siegel says he's mellowed out quite a bit since those early days, back when he earned the nickname "Fiery Ron," partly because running a barbecue restaurant is literally playing with fire, but mostly because of his personality. Siegel is in his 50s now, and there's a little more white in his beard stubble. He admits that he talks less and listens more these days. But says his wife will still call him "Fiery," poking fun at him when he gets riled up about something.

We catch up for a minute and then order our lunch. Siegel goes for the chopped pastrami sandwich special with a side of cucumber-tomato salad. I get the Reuben, of course, and add a side of collards.

Good thing that they only do pastrami on Thursdays, I think to myself, or else I might eat here every day. It would be easy to do.



Aaron Siegel (Owner/Founder/Pitmaster) of Home Team BBQ

Home Team is situated perfectly between my house and the *West Of Free Press* office in Avondale, just minutes from both. It's always been in regular rotation for the newspaper crew, ever since it first opened its doors 20 years ago. *West Of* was brand new then, too, and I can remember bringing the whole staff in on the first day it opened. We hosted the first-ever Westie Awards ceremony in this

continued on page 19 ...

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restaurant. Home Team catered my wedding.

But for all the memories this place holds for me, it holds so much more for Siegel. This is the place where he bet it all 20 years ago, giving up his fine-dining career and trading in his white chef's coat to stoke the coals all night, attempting to do something innovative in an industry steeped in tradition, particularly here in South Carolina. Siegel is a Georgia native, but don't hold it against him ... except maybe on Saturdays during football season when the place is jam-packed with barking Bulldog fans. Go Cocks!

Football rivalries aside, the barbecue world can also be a tad territorial, and Siegel sure heard about it early on.

"There are a lot more players in the barbecue world, and people have put down their regional boundaries," says Siegel, referring to all the new places and different styles that have popped up since he first opened Home Team two decades ago. But that wasn't always the case, he remembers.

"When we first opened, we didn't have a mustard sauce, and people were pissed," he says. "So we added a mustard sauce."

Aside from maybe Sticky Fingers, most barbecue restaurants around the Lowcountry at that time were old-school South Carolina joints, like Bessinger's BBQ, Melvin's BBQ, and Sweatman's Barbeque in Holly Hill. While respecting those traditions, Siegel, who has a culinary degree from the Culinary Institute of America, had a different vision for what a barbecue restaurant could be.

"I came from a background that was big

on technique and fundamentals. So, if you had told me then that we would be known for chicken wings, I probably would have been mad," says Siegel, laughing. "But you can apply those techniques and fundamentals to anything. Nothing starts out and ends the same way. And you have to change and learn to love what people love you for."

And over 20 years that's exactly what Home Team BBQ has done, adapted and evolved, while always staying true to Siegel's vision of a different kind of barbecue restaurant.

"We've always been a little bit unique," he says. "We serve wings, nachos, and Game Changers (Home Team's famous frozen cocktail inspired by the classic painkiller); we have a great bourbon selection, and there can't be any barbecue places in the country that do more salads than we do. There aren't any placeholders on the menu."

Between bites of perfectly smoked and cured pastrami, Siegel points to various concert posters, autographed photos, and magazine clippings on the wall. In the back office, he still has the first *West Of* article we wrote back in 2006 framed.

"A lot of old memories are here," says Siegel.

Beyond all the memorabilia and decor, what sticks out most to Siegel, what he seems to be most proud of, are the people. Yes, the people who patronize his restaurant and come back to eat week after week or year after year when visiting Charleston, but especially the people who have worked here over the years. Many of whom are still with the company.

"It's amazing looking back at the team of



Sean Daniher (Operating Partner/General Manager), Taylor Garrigan (Operating Partner/Head Chef), Aaron Siegel (Owner/Founder/Pitmaster), and Tony McKie (Operating Partner/ Talent Buyer)

people we've put together over the years. The people who have really built their own lives under our roof. Those who went from hourly to management," says Siegel. "We talk about our culture a lot and try and define what that is. At the end of the day, we try to make people comfortable. We've been a company where people can grow and don't have to go somewhere else."

Of course, sometimes people do leave. And for those who started at Home Team and have gone on to succeed in their own businesses, Siegel is proud of them, too. He gives props to former West Ashley Home Team employees Madison Ruckel, who went on to start the acclaimed Mama Jean's BBQ in Roanoke, Vir., and Reid Stone, who now owns Paddock & Whiskey, one of the top bourbon bars in the Southeast.

Aside from both having been part of the early Home Team crew and successful business owners in their own right, both Ruckel and Reid are musicians who have graced the West Ashley Home Team stage (back when it had a stage) more than a couple of times.

This month, when Home Team BBQ

celebrates it's 20th birthday with a huge bash at The Refinery downtown on Saturday, Sept. 26 both Ruckel and Reid will be among the musicians playing, along with national acts like Paul Cauthen, Jerry Joseph, and Domingo "Sunny" Ortiz from Widespread Panic, a band which inspired Home Team's name. Officially getting things started the night before, Friday, Sept. 25, Home Team BBQ Downtown will welcome Bloodkin.

Other former and current Home Team employees and musicians who have played at the restaurant will also play, including head chef and managing partner Taylor Garrigan.

"Music is part of our DNA," says Siegel. "We wanted to pay tribute to our past. Everybody that's playing that weekend has either worked here, played at our place before, or we've fed them."

The 20 Years of Home Team BBQ celebration will be held on Saturday, Sept. 26 at The Refinery, located at 1640 Meeting St. For more information or to purchase tickets visit www.hometeambbq.com

Wine Down at West Ashley's Newest Park

Popular series returns to Old Towne Creek County Park for two September dates

from Staff Reports

West Ashley's newest public park is giving visitors a couple of reasons to stick around until sunset this September.

Wine Down Wednesday returns to Old Towne Creek County Park on Sept. 9 and Sept. 23, offering an evening of wine, live music, food trucks, and a chance to explore the recently opened 67-acre park along Old Towne Road.

The Charleston County Park and Recreation Commission launched the series at the park last month, with the Aug. 26 event selling out in advance. The two September gatherings will run from 5-7 p.m.

Wine Down Wednesday gives guests a chance to wander the park's trails and boardwalks, take in its marsh views, or settle beneath the property's live oaks while enjoying wine and live music.

The Sept. 9 event will feature music from Josh Michum, with food available for purchase from Lib's Diner and Tamashii. On Sept. 23, Hollyn Belle Hills and Riley Hills will perform, with & Lobster and Pizza de Michelino serving food.

Old Towne Creek County Park officially opened June 30, adding a significant new public greenspace in the heart of West Ashley. In addition to trails, boardwalks, and marsh views, the park features a nature-inspired playground and educational elements highlighting the property's history and ecology.

Guests are encouraged to bring chairs or tables and may bring their own food, although outside alcohol is prohibited. Dogs are welcome but must remain leashed.

Tickets are \$20 in advance and \$25 the day of the event, if available, and include wine. Admission is free for guests who will not be drinking alcohol. A valid ID is required for alcohol service.

Wine Down Wednesday will be held Wednesday, Sept. 9 and Sept. 23, from 5-7 p.m. at Old Towne Creek County Park, located at 1400 Old Towne Road. Tickets are \$20 in advance or \$25 day-of, if available. Non-drinking guests may attend for free. For more information or to purchase tickets, visit www.CharlestonCountyParks.com.





COMMUNITY

“We’ve come to feel at home in West Ashley, and we love creating a place where our customers can feel at home too.”

— Rachel Eichhorn, Café Charlotte, co-owner



Bean There, Done That

Exploring West Ashley’s coffee shops, one cup at a time

When artist MASÁRE let me know he had completed the current eye-catching mural project on the side of the Drake Fitness building in Avondale, I walked down to catch the scene without cars parked in front of it. It is especially meaningful because we are soon going to lose the wall that has showcased so many incredible works of art through the years.

This sweltering summer, my routine has included lifesaving and refreshing iced coffee breaks. I may be a puddle of sweat by the time I arrive, but I can walk to five coffee shops while others are on my regular routes.

I’m not alone. We meet up with friends and enjoy people-watching with our nibbles. Starbucks and Biggby stay busy with drive-through lanes, and I watch my neighbors traipsing home with cups in hand after their morning walk.

I put out a shout-out for feedback on social media, asking West Ashley neighbors for their favorite haunts, sent a query email to local coffee shops and cafes that offer sit-down seating, and compiled the feedback I received. Hopefully one of these is close to you.

Café Roca

1303 Ashley River Road

Café Roca is on my regular rotation. If I haven’t walked down, I scan for available pull-in parking spots on my way home from exercise class. Neighbors Lynn Clingman and Eric Eisenbud boasted, “We are Café Roca kinda people!”

“We are a cafe with a breakfast/lunch program to rival most sit-down restaurants in the area,” said General Manager Emily Lippes. “Our co-owner Joe (Walker) loves all things ’90s, music, and film. You can tuck away in the back corner and listen to music.”

According to Lippes, all syrups for the coffee program are made in-house, as well as the granola for the Hemp Granola Bowl. More

than a coffeeshop, people are obsessed with Roca’s food as well.

Many of the baristas have been with Roca since the beginning and know the customers by name.

“We are a neighborhood café. We were recently a drop location for donations for people who lost so much in the nearby apartment fires,” says Lippes. “Our owner is here every day and has big plans for the rest of this little strip, with Bad Bambino opening soon and a reopening of the corner store with a brand-new vision.”

Café Charlotte

874 Orleans Road

Café Charlotte is a family-owned European-style café on Orleans Road, offering coffee and pastries alongside breakfast favorites, baguettes, strudel, and brunch, as well as catering. Social media brought happy shout-outs for Café Charlotte’s co-owners Tom and Rachel Eichhorn and staff. Follow them for fun social media updates.

“Most of all, we want Café Charlotte to feel warm, friendly, and personal— a place where you’re greeted by name, enjoy good food and coffee, and feel like part of the neighborhood,” said Rachel. “We’ve come to feel at home in West Ashley, and we love creating a place where our customers can feel at home too.”

WildFlour Bakery

1750 Savannah Hwy.

When the question of Best Cozy Coffee Shop comes up, Wildflour Bakery is frequently mentioned as a winner. Coffee, delicious baked goods, a kids’ play area, local art on the wall, and frozen goods to take home. I hike (6,000 steps to and from) up the West Ashley Bikeway to Wildflour, hoping to lose the calories I eat when I treat myself to their mini frittata or chocolate croissant.



Café Charlotte is a welcoming European-style Eatery

“We are a local bakery focusing on scratch-made everything: pastries, pies, cakes, coffee, and more. We have a new and yummy savory menu including all-day brunch options, sandwiches, and sourdough pizzas. We pride ourselves on our cozy, community-focused atmosphere, including a special kid’s area,” said WildFlour owner Lauren Mitterer.

Debbie Dinger, Nursing Supervisor at Bon Secours St. Francis Hospital, commented, “That frittata from WildFlour is the best I’ve ever had. It’s like a savory custard. I’d eat one every day if I could.”

Wildflour regular and fellow West Of columnist Donna Jacobs added, “Sticky Bun Sunday is a thing!”

Biggby Coffee

903 St Andrews Blvd Suite A

You might not think a franchise chain store would make the cut, but I give Biggby bonus

points for a welcome greeting, knowing customers by name, offering specials and trinkets for kids.

Monday mornings I volunteer in the Lowcountry Food Bank kitchen. I’m hot, sweaty, and wearing a ball cap in lieu of a hair net. On my way home, I pop into Consign Charleston, rummage through the bins at Where Ya’ Bin, and pull into Biggby Coffee. I order my iced coffee and bagel with cream cheese and relax.

Among my fellow regulars, I noticed a lady and gentleman who sit at the same table, are addressed respectfully by name, and are clearly long-term friends. I know this because this column gives me the authority to butt into people’s business. So I asked. Former co-workers from years ago, they get together every week to solve the world’s problems.

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Normandy Farms 32 Windermere Blvd.

Normandy Farms is my destination after walking down the West Ashley Greenway. They are primarily a bakery in South Windermere, offering coffee, baked goods, quiche, and savory sandwiches, with indoor and patio seating, plenty of nearby parking, and access to the Greenway.

Normandy Farms strives for radicalness in artisan breads, pastries, and roasting coffee. If you are in search of the perfect loaf, they "wake and bake so you don't have to!"

Highfalutin Coffee Roasters 27 Magnolia Road

Highfalutin in Avondale is within my marching range and where I am sure to bump into neighbors. It is my destination when my car is visiting Firestone Auto and we both get refilled.

Highfalutin wins my award for best and busiest patio. They exclusively source top tiered coffee, offering a selection that is highly curated and concise. Their delicious, giant slice of banana bread could feed a family of three, or me, and offer parking behind the shops.

Charleston Coffee Exchange 2875 Ashley River Road, Suite 1

Charleston Coffee Exchange is in the plaza at Bees Ferry and can be accessed from either Bees Ferry or Ashley River Road. It's a convenient stop after my frequent Audubon Swamp trail hikes. They offer whole-bean and ground coffee by the pound, as well as

a subscription Coffee Club. It is a popular sit-down cafe with a friendly, welcoming staff. Elizabeth Ann on West Ashley Connects forum commented: "Best tasting coffee ever. I never thought I was a coffee aficionado until I went to the Charleston Coffee Exchange."

Christophe Artisan Chocolatier 1901 Ashley River Road #2A

Christophe's is famous for chocolates but also offers a sit-down café in partnership with the Charleston Coffee Exchange. After my recent visit and almond croissant, my friend Betina assured me I'm not eating calories, but doing scientific research. I'm also tempted by their chocolate and macaron-making weekend classes.

Paula Caffey on Facebook responded: "It's a jewel of a place, with a downtown location as well. I love this place, maybe a little too much," said Jane Barcott. "Christophes! French press coffee and I dream about their almond croissants."

"Christophe's is a Gourmet French cafe specializing in Toulouse-style artisan chocolates, as well as macarons & an assortment of pastries tweaked to the European palette. Some of our most popular pastries are our #1 Almond croissant & #2 French donuts, as well as the French classics, like the Tarte Normande and Canele," said general manager Lady Lauderdale. We partner with Charleston Coffee Exchange to bring a local Charleston cafe experience."

Second State 1630 Ashley Hall Road

I hadn't been to Second State Coffee



A welcomed addition to West Ashley, Café Roca is a lively coffee shop and restaurant.

for a while but had their specialty savory waffles on my mind before a recent visit - for good reason. It was delicious. They have inside seating as well as a small outside patio.

"Charleston's most established specialty coffee roaster. The West Ashley shop is a perfect stop for every coffee nerd. This shop features our own locally roasted specialty coffee, plus house-made gluten-free waffles, and artisan toasts," said Second State owner Ross Jett. "Expect expertly-brewed espresso from our Synesso MVP Hydra, single-origin pour-overs from highly skilled baristas, the best cold brew, house-made syrups, seasonal specialty drinks, insanely good matcha, loose-leaf Rishi teas, and a rotating selection of tasty pastries."

BKedSHOP

555 Shadowmoss Pkwy.

BKdedSHOP is a welcome, relatively new shop that already has enthusiastic social media support for cute decor, amazing donuts, and easy parking.

Not to be forgotten - Baguette Magic on Wappoo Road sells coffee to go and baked goods, the Rambler Coffee Trailer is at 624 DuPont Road, Ruby's Bagels is on Ashley River Road near Sam Rittenburg offering New York style bagels and drinks, Bagel Nation is on Magwood Road and Biscuit Bros is on Orangegrove Road and of course, Starbucks at multiple locations.

Stay healthy my friends and wave at me as I wander. Send ideas to: westashleywanderer@gmail.com.

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Mermaids & MATEYS

Folly Beach, SC

Saturday, October 3 • FREE ADMISSION

Ahoy, friends! The Mermaids & Mateys Festival returns to Folly Beach on October 3, 2026, from 10am - 4pm. Gather your crew, dust off your mermaid tail or pirate gear, and get ready to celebrate the sea in true Folly fashion, with a splash of spooky fall fun.



SET SAIL FOR A DAY OF FOLLY FUN

- 🦋 Live music and performances
- 🦋 80+ local art, craft, and fashion vendors
- 🦋 Mermaid, Matey, and Under the Sea costume contests
- 🦋 Under the Sea Kids Area presented by Good Clean Fun
- 🦋 Mermaids, sand crafts, stilt walkers, inflatables, games, and more
- 🦋 Dunk tank and family-friendly fun
- 🦋 Paint Folly Purple in support of the Alzheimer's Association – South Carolina Chapter

ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

SCAN HERE to Register for Your **FREE ADMISSION** into the Festival

Registration is required. Registration does not guarantee entry. Admission is first-come, first-served up to capacity. for the Application



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A Wave of Nostalgia

Rocks and Razorbacks documentary brings about many happy memories from St. Andrew's and Middleton High Schools

Nostalgia. The definition provided on Dictionary.com is a lovely one: "a wistful desire to return in thought or in fact to a former time in one's life, to one's home or homeland, or to one's family and friends; a sentimental yearning for the happiness of a former place or time."

This definition captures exactly the sentiment expressed by Chelsea Reid, Associate Professor of Psychology at the College of Charleston, in an interview with Tim Fennell for his Rocks and Razorbacks documentary project. A primary focus of her research is how nostalgia helps maintain social connection. This is also one of Fennell's perspectives that he is exploring for the documentary.

When Fennell learned that the building that had originally housed Middleton High School and, in recent times, C.E. Williams Middle School was to be demolished, a wave of nostalgia washed over him. As a documentary filmmaker, it was time to get this on film. And his efforts have unleashed a tsunami of nostalgia among many alumni of Middleton High School and St. Andrew's Parish High School.

This tsunami is currently being captured on his *Rocks and Razorbacks* YouTube channel, where he teases the community with interviews he collects along the way toward film production. Podcast 001 features St. Andrews Parish HS Principal Jimmy Golden.

Currently, there are 19 videos to enjoy featuring interviews that include Barbara Gilchrist, Linda Fox Irwin, and the St Andrew's Parish High School Class of 1959 reunion, Middleton High School Class of 1980, and even one with me talking about Mr. Hester's scrapbooks that are in the loving care of the College of Charleston Special Collections.

Sidebar update: Because of Fennell's work, the third missing scrapbook of Mr. Hester's



Tim Fennell and his team getting the memories on film at the former Middleton High School

has been found and is now with the other two at Special Collections. It has taken about 13 years to find it – perseverance paid off!

When *West Of Free Press* approached me almost 15 years ago to compose the "West Ashley Flashback" column for the community I couldn't have imagined the information, stories, photographs, and beautiful community memories that we would come to share. Yes, a tsunami of nostalgia. I experience it in every interview with the lovely people I meet.

So, tune in to Fennell's Rocks and Razorbacks channel. www.youtube.com/@RocksandRazorbacksPodcast

Maybe a wave of nostalgia will roll over you and you will contact Donna at westashleybook@gmail.com with a fun community story.



Students perched on Middleton High School sign (Image shared by Tim Fennell)



Senior Steps of St Andrew's Parish High School (Photograph by Luther Bootle, courtesy of Ina Bootle)

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7:00 AM - CHECK IN/REGISTRATION

8:00 AM - RACE BEGINS

**9:00 - 11:00 AM - AFTER RACE PARTY WITH
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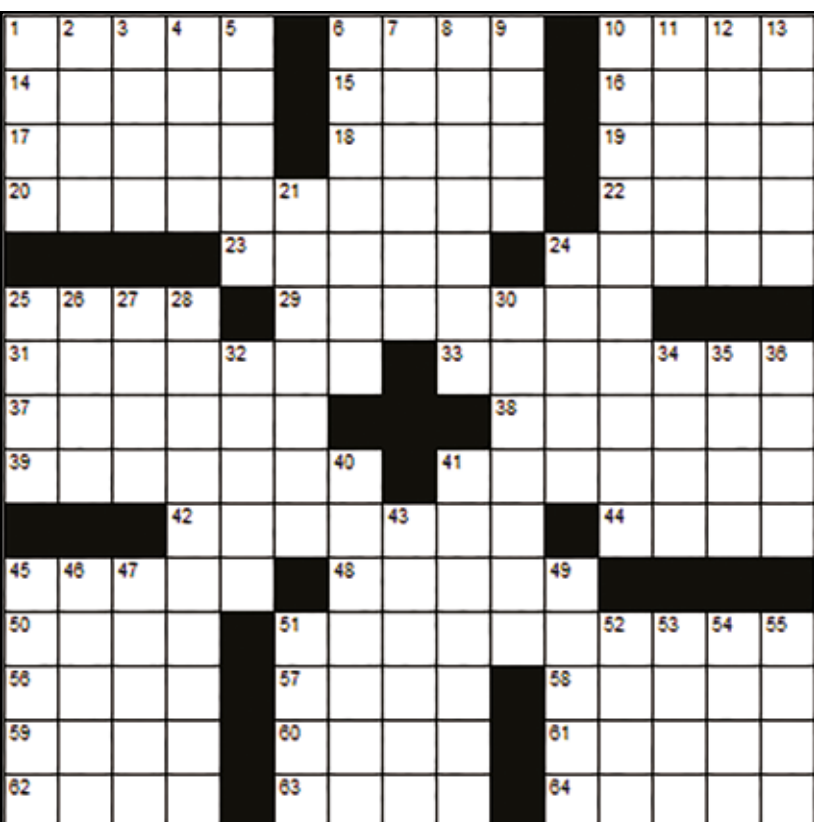
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FUN & GAMES

WEST OF CROSSWORD



ACROSS

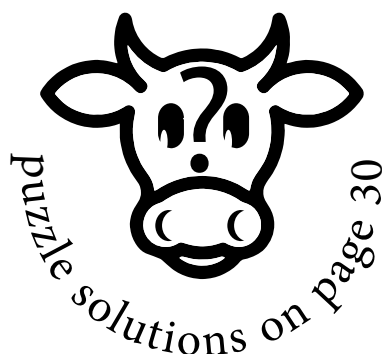
- Protective covering from sunlight
- Supervisor
- Annoyance
- Auspices
- A Great Lake
- Assess
- Stupendous
- Healthy
- Freudian topics
- Foolish
- Uncluttered
- Talking bird of poetry
- Grocery carriers
- Makes lace
- British soldier (18th century)
- Tallies
- Unpredictable
- Roomy sleeve
- Ravel classic
- Break
- Peak
- Cheese dish
- Cravings
- Blacksmith's block
- Deadly

- Hurt
- Luster
- Fair attraction
- Harvard rival
- Breathe noisily while asleep
- Angers
- Connections
- Committee
- Neighbor of Vietnam
- Terminates
- Slumber

DOWN

- Detailed account
- A group of cattle
- Ancient
- Found on rotary phones
- Aromatic compound
- Conducts
- Spoke
- Absolute quiet
- Sow
- Before birth
- Keen
- Brown ermine
- Quizzes
- Associate
- Christmas song

- Seafarers
- Asian nurse
- Roman robe
- Sex appeal
- Like a planet's path
- Birth-related
- French for "Head"
- Weightlifters pump this
- Police officers
- Chorus
- Lack of success in baseball
- Released from jail
- Spring month
- Nigerian money
- Not audio
- Speech defects
- Memory unit
- Nitpicky to a fault
- Not any
- Algonquian Indian
- Cry of pain



SUDOKU

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TRIVIA

1. MOVIES

What is the name of Ridley Scott's new apocalyptic thriller based on a book by Peter Heller?

2. REALITY TV

What sitcom star and outspoken Scientologist critic joins The Real Housewives of Beverly Hills for it's 16th season?

3. INTERNET

Known for his outlandish stunts and disguises, who was just named Rolling Stone's #1 Most Influential Creators list?

4. BEAUTY PAGEANTS

Justus Kelley just became the first mother to win the title of Miss USA. She is from what state?

5. TALK SHOWS

What musician drew the ire of MAGA recently when he guest-hosted Jimmy Kimmel and took some comedic shots at the President?

6. COMEDY

Sacha Baron Cohen has made feature films featuring his characters Borat and Brüno. A new one featuring what other popular character of his?

7. REST IN PEACE

What 80-year-old actor, known for playing Pennywise the Dancing Clown in the 1990 made-for-TV version of Stephen King's It, passed away last month at the age of 80?

8. MUSIC

What member of the Beastie Boys released a solo record entitled "Thank You"?



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Mahjong

Tuesdays, 6:30 p.m. Shadowmoss Pavilion (Clubhouse during rain) \$5 PIE. All skill levels welcome.

West Ashley Writers Group

4th Wednesday, 7–9 p.m. (Zoom) <https://www.facebook.com/westashleywritersgroup> Free. Writers of all genres welcome.

Needlework & Sewing Groups

• **American Needlepoint Guild** — 4th Tuesday, 10 a.m./ contact nancythechief@gmail.com.
• **Embroidery Guild of America** — 2nd Sunday, 2:30 p.m.
• **Sampler Guild of Charleston** —

4th Monday, 10 a.m. All meet at Old St. Andrews Parish Church Fellowship Hall, 2604 Ashley River Rd. Contact nancythechief@gmail.com

West Ashley Quilting & Sewing

• 2nd Tuesday, 10 a.m.–Noon — 460 Arlington Dr.
• 4th Tuesday Open Sew, 10 a.m.–2 p.m. — Five Eighth Seams, 1888 Raoul Wallenberg Blvd. Find on Facebook or contact cgb7507@gmail.com.

FITNESS & RECREATION

Bees Landing Recreation Center
1580 Ashley Gardens Blvd.
(843) 402-4571

• **Zumba Gold** — Mon., Wed. & Fri., 9:30–10:30 a.m. (\$5/class)
• **Indoor Pickleball** — Mon., Wed. & Fri., 10:30 a.m.–1:30 p.m. (\$2/resident, \$4 non-resident)

St. Andrew's Parks & Playground
1095 Playground Rd., (843) 763-4360, www.standrewsparks.com

• **Pickleball** — Tuesdays & Thursdays, 10 a.m.–Noon (seasonal)

• **Winter Sports Registration** – Basketball: Coed (Ages 4, 5-6), Boys (Ages 7-8, 9-10,11-12), Girls (Ages 7-8, 9-10, 11-12) • Early Registration - September 21 – September 27 (\$55 St. Andrew's PSD Residents/\$85 Non-St. Andrew's PSD Residents) • Regular Registration - September 28 – October 11 (\$70 St. Andrew's PSD Residents/\$100 Non-St. Andrew's PSD Residents) • Late Registration (Based on availability) - October 12 -- October 16 (\$90 St. Andrew's PSD Residents/\$120 Non-St. Andrew's PSD Residents). Register online at www.standrewsparks.com or call 843-763-4360.
• **Youth Tennis Clinics Fall 2026** – Little Tennis (Wed. 3:30-4 PM)

\$40. Red Ball (Mon. 4-5 PM)
\$85. Green Ball (Thur. 5-6 PM)
\$100. Yellow Ball (Mon. 5-6 PM)
\$100. Orange Ball (Tues. 5-6 PM)
\$100. customerservice@standrewsparks.com
• **St. Andrew's Parks Legacy Foundation Golf Tournament** – Monday, Oct. 19. Presented by West Ashley Optimist Club. tournament at Shadowmoss Plantation. For more information, visit www.standrewsparks.info/scholarship-golf-tournament

LIBRARIES & LEARNING

All three West Ashley libraries offer story times, crafts, clubs, computer classes, and special programming for children and adults.

Bees Ferry Library
3035 Sanders Rd.
(843) 805-6892

Hurd/St. Andrews Library
1735 N. Woodmere Dr.
(843) 766-2546

West Ashley Library
45 Windermere Blvd.
(843) 766-6635

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

Charleston Parks Conservancy
Visit www.charlestonparksconservancy.org for more information.

• **Early Morning Bird Walk** – West Ashely Greenway MP7-8, McLeod Mill Rd., must RSVP on website, registration opens one month prior to the walk.
• **Music in the Parks with Rosy Bones & Food Trucks** – Thursday, Sept. 10, 5:30-7:30pm, Free. Magnolia Park and Community Garden, 720 Magnolia Rd.
• **The Night Shift: A Twilight Polinator Experience** – Wednesday,

Sept. 16, 6-7:30pm, Mulberry Park and Food Forest, 1653 Mulberry St.

Caw Caw Interpretive Center
5200 Savannah Hwy., (843) 762-8015, www.ccprc.com

• **Early Morning Bird Walks** — Wednesdays & Saturdays 8:30-10:30am, \$12, all ages
• **Gator Tales** – Tuesday, Sept. 8, 10am-12pm, \$12, ages 12 & up
• **The Bluest Dye: An Indigo Dyeing Workshop** – Saturday, Sept. 19, noon-2pm, ages 16 & up, \$12

Old Towne Creek County Park
1400 Old Towne Rd., (843) 795-4386

• **Wine Down Wednesday** – Sept. 9, 23 w/ Live Music, age 21+, \$20 per person, tickets at www.ccprc.com
• **Nature Ramble** – Saturday, Sept. 5, 8:30-10:30 a.m., Ages 12 & up, \$12. Sign up at www.ccprc.com

Stono River County Park
3580 McLeod Mill Rd.

HISTORY & CULTURE

Charles Towne Landing
1500 Old Towne Rd., (843) 852-4200, www.southcarolinaparks.com/charles-towne-landing.com

Magnolia Plantation & Gardens
3550 Ashley River Rd., (843) 571-1266, www.magnoliaplantation.com

• **Journey to Indigo** – Aug. 1-Nov. 15, free with admission to the garden
• **Nature Journaling Workshop** – Sept. 12, 9-11am (\$50)
• **Stretch and Sip** – Sept. 19, 9-11am (\$50)
• **Wearing your Indigo Art** – Sept. 26 & 27, 9am-3pm (\$300)
• **Bluegrass, BBQ, & Brews** with The Green Levels – Sept. 26,

1-4pm (\$75 advanced, \$85 after)
• **Speaker Series:** Up close and personal tour of the Francis Marion's botanical bounty – Sept. 27, 3-4:30pm (free with pre-registration)

Drayton Hall

3380 Ashley River Rd., (843) 769-2600, www.draytonhall.org

• **Family Friday** – Sept. 4, 10-11am, for toddlers and pre-schoolers, space is limited.
• **Beyond the Bookshelf:** A Deep Dive into the Drayton Hall Library – Thursday, Sept. 24.
• **Drayton Hall at Night** – Saturday, Sept. 26, Beer & wine available for purchase. Register in advance.
• **Brackish Bracelet Design Workshop** – Saturday, Sept. 26. Reserve your spot in advance.

Middleton Place

4300 Ashley River Rd., (843) 556-6020, www.middletonplace.org

SENIOR PROGRAMS

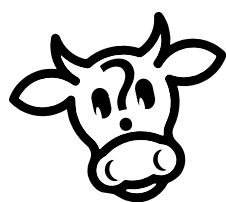
Waring Senior Center
2001 Henry Tecklenburg Dr.
(843) 606-7877

Offers yoga, Tai Chi, strength training, dance classes, art classes, and social activities for members and non-members.

** Please check with the individual clubs, groups, and events for updates, as some of these events may have changed.*

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

S	H	A	D	E		B	O	S	S		P	E	S	T	
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SUDOKU SOLUTION

7	2	8	5	3	9	1	4	6
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6	4	3	8	5	2	7	1	9
2	1	9	6	4	5	3	7	8
4	7	6	2	8	3	5	9	1
8	3	5	9	1	7	4	6	2

TRIVIA ANSWERS

1. The Dog Stars
2. Leah Remini
3. Druski
4. Virginia
5. Jelly Roll
6. Ali G
7. Tim Curry
8. Mike D



Giant Redfish Head to Shallower Waters

September is a Fisherman's dream in the Lowcountry

It's the best times of the year for inshore fishing. Cooler water temperatures, abundant bait, and significantly lighter boat traffic create a perfect environment for success, offering big rewards for anglers willing to focus on fishing.

Redfish and trout begin aggressively striking artificials this month, making soft plastics exceptionally effective. A Z-Man 3.75-inch StreakZ in Smokey Shad paired with a 1/8-ounce jighead is a reliable starting point, though heavier weights may be necessary depending on depth and current. When working a spot, experiment with your retrieve speed, as simply speeding up or slowing down the action can frequently trigger a hesitant strike.

Even with the rise of artificial lures, popping corks remain a go-to tactic for both trout and redfish. Suspending live shrimp, mud minnows, or plastic imitations roughly 18 to 24 inches below the cork yields great results, especially when

drifted over shell rakes and along grassy banks during mid-to-high tide.

Meanwhile, giant bull redfish measuring over 36 inches begin moving out of the jetties and near-shore reefs into local harbors and inlets to feed on large mullet and menhaden. To target these heavy hitters, rig a stout rod with heavy braided line, a 50-to-60-pound leader, and a 7/0 circle hook baited with fresh chunks of cut bait. Position yourself over distinct depth changes and wait for the rod to double over. See you on the water!

Since 2009, Capt. Geoff Bennett has operated Charleston Charter Fishing providing light tackle charters. Clients choose from a full menu of artificial, live bait and fly fishing options with charters tailored to their desires. USCG licensed and insured, Capt. Bennett is committed to providing a safe and enjoyable charter to anglers of all skill levels and ages. For more information, call Capt. Bennett at 843-324-3332, visit his website at www.charlestoncharterfishing.com or email him at captain@charlestoncharterfishing.com.



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RODDY REY
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WHIT SLAGSVOL
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MOLLY O'CONNELL
Jury Member, Furry Friends

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- › **WEEK-DAY BLUE PLATE LUNCH & DINNER SPECIALS**
- › **LIVE MUSIC**
- › **HAPPY HOUR M-F 4-7PM**

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4-6PM**

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