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EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE

VETERANS/FIRST RESPONDER ISSUE



RICKY EILERMAN

A Veteran's Journey of Resilience and Transformation

August/September 2023

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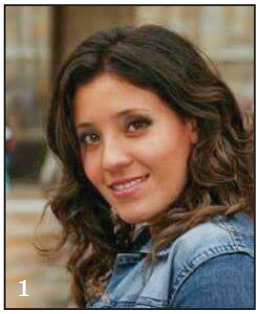
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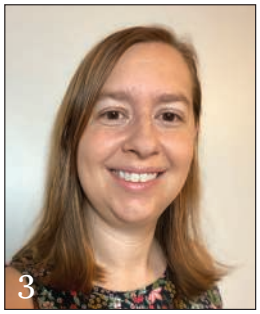
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5. Mabel, morale officer, enjoys roaming the backyard at home, sitting for hours on the back porch and coming to the office to greet visitors and encourage the staff. Mabel loves getting treats and taking long naps in her mommy's office in the afternoons.




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THANK YOU TO OUR WONDERFUL TEAM OF STAFF AND CONTRIBUTORS WHO MAKE EACH ISSUE OF *EFFINGHAM MAGAZINE* THE BEST IT CAN BE! WE APPRECIATE YOU!

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR
Write to us and tell us what you think. *Effingham 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 Phone numbers will not be published.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
Effingham 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 Effingham County will be considered.

CIRCULATION: *Effingham Magazine* is published bi-monthly and distributed to more than 250 locations throughout the area, as well as mailed to thousands of homes. The full magazine is available online at EffinghamMagazine.com.

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We Salute You


Jan Southern

Our annual **Veterans/First Responder** issue of *Effingham Magazine* is here. We are honored to have the opportunity to share this with our readers and give recognition to such important people in our community.

Never have I appreciated veterans more after getting to know more about the sacrifices they make each day. Our Chief Operations Officer Morris Southern is a veteran of the United States 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 hear from Ricky Eilerman, who turned his struggles into blessings by helping other veterans and bettering his community at the same time.

Robert Atkins, a talented cartoonist and professor shares his talents in a comic book series for the U.S. Army. Wait until you see his work—it is truly impressive.

The commitment and sacrifices our medical community and first responders make for all of us is recognized and appreciated as well. We celebrate them all and feature those nominated on page 18.

This issue is our small way of showing our heartfelt appreciation for those who serve for causes bigger than themselves: their families, their communities and their country. We hope you enjoy their stories.

Jan Southern

CEO/Publisher
Effingham Magazine

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Melissa McBride Stille

of Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage, LLC

Are You Ready for Health Insurance Open Enrollment?

Melissa McBride Stille is a health insurance broker who has been in the health insurance industry for 15 years. As the sole proprietor of **Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage** she is dedicated to presenting her clients with the best health care options available because, "I work for my clients, not the insurance company!"

Medicare Annual Open Enrollment Oct 15 - Dec 7

The Medicare Open Enrollment Period is when everyone with Medicare has to choose to either keep their current plan or enroll in a different one.

Don't make the mistake of thinking your insurance coverage and cost remain the same because they do not! Health and drug plans can change cost, coverage, and who is in their networks from year to year.

It's tempting to keep what you have, even if you aren't satisfied, because investigating new plans can be very confusing. That's why working with a local agent is critical to obtaining the best outcome for your needs.

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Melissa can explain the four parts of Medicare (A, B, C, and D) as well the difference between Medicare Advantage and Supplemental Plans. She can also assist with seeing if you qualify for Extra Help (federal prescription help), Medicaid or to eliminate the monthly $164.90 Medicare Part B Premium (2023 premium).

Melissa also works with Medicare recipients under 65, including those who have Medicare through Social Security Disability, because they too have to make the same decisions annually.

Local Trusted Agent

With so many health insurance companies trying to get your business, how do you know what to do? Their only goal is for you to change your plan.

"That's how they make money. They do not have any special plans, so don't be fooled," says Melissa. "They can change your plan without a signature or without you knowing! All they need is your Medicare number, so do not give it out."

Melissa takes pride in helping you find the plan that fits YOUR needs and being there for you after open enrollment.

"When a client's circumstances change, that can impact their health insurance, so keeping in touch is crucial," she says. "I promise, as my client, you will hear from me. I care about each and every client and do a review of everyone's health policies every year because there are so many changes annually. I like to simplify things and present you with your best options."

If you have a question regarding your health insurance options, give Melissa a call or send her an email. Remember, there is **NO COST** because, "I work for my clients, not the insurance company!"

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ABOUT THE COVER



Ricky Eilerman, an Army veteran, overcame adversity in his life with courage and determination and found his purpose in helping others—especially his fellow military veterans.

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Jessalyn Barrett, Barrett Law, LLC

Jessalyn Barrett, an attorney with many years of practical experience, has opened a local law practice. After graduating from Georgia State University College of Law she served as an Assistant District Attorney before leaving the public sector to establish **Barrett Law, LLC**.

"I became an attorney to help people," says Jessalyn. "I promise my clients they will be seen and heard. Everyone deserves representation. Utilizing my years of legal experience, I will go to bat for you to achieve the best possible outcome."

Current Areas of Practice:

PERSONAL INJURY:

- Motor Vehicle Accidents
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- Dog Bites
- Negligent Security
- Assault and Battery

FAMILY LAW:

- Divorce
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- Child Custody
- Guardianship
- Assistance post-divorce with modifications and contempts

Client Friendly

Jessalyn uses technology to make her clients experience both efficient and convenient. She says, "My drop box system is set up so clients can see—and add to—every document pertaining to their case at any time, day or night. With busy schedules, being able to tap into their case without having to come into an office is a relief for my clients."

All consultations are free of charge, and for added convenience you can schedule a free 30-minute consultation online at barrettlawllc.com. "I feel strongly that legal fees should be upfront, therefore I use a flat rate system for family law cases. You will know the cost each step of the way so you can make decisions that fit your budget," says Jessalyn. Personal injury cases are paid on a contingent fee basis, with no upfront cost to the client.

A busy mother of four, Jessalyn enjoys family beach days, cooking new recipes, and living near the water. "We moved here for the slower pace of life in the lowcountry and we love it," she says. "It's a breath of fresh air."

If you are looking for an attorney who is on your side and is open, honest and transparent in every way, reach out to Jessalyn Barrett, Barrett Law, LLC.



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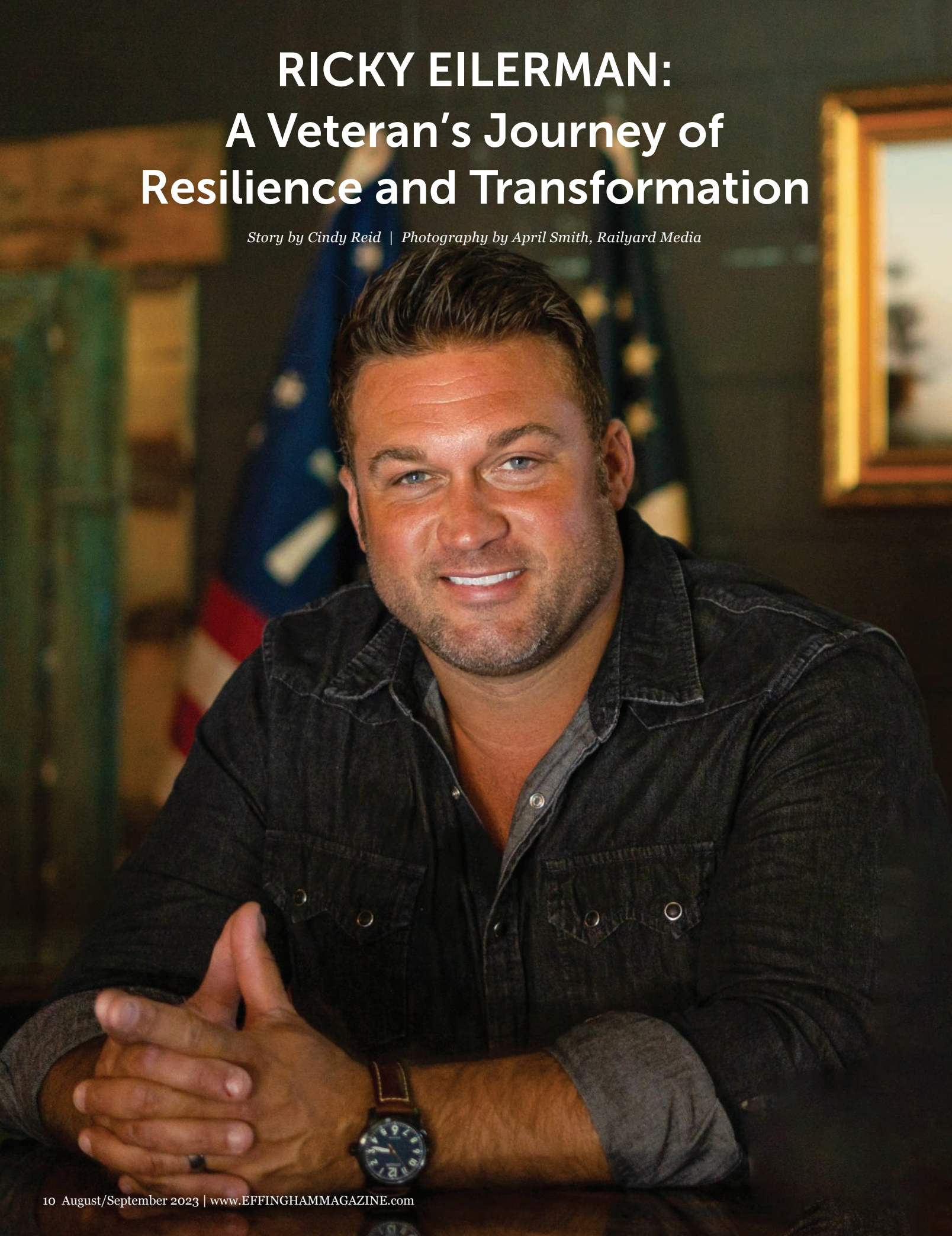


Thank You

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

RICKY EILERMAN: A Veteran's Journey of Resilience and Transformation

Story by Cindy Reid | Photography by April Smith, Railyard Media



The power of finding purpose can illuminate a life. For Ricky Eilerman, the courage and determination he has used to overcome adversity in his own life has brought him that power of purpose. By using his experiences to light the way for others, particularly fellow military veterans and sufferers of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), Ricky has been able to turn darkness into light.

Born and raised in Bel Air, Maryland, Ricky says his early years were "marked by a longing for more." Growing up with limited resources, he often dreamed of a big brick house with a pool and "all the fun toys that came with it."

Military life called to him and he enlisted in the U.S. Army, serving from 2000 to 2005 during the Global War on Terror. Ricky was stationed in Mosul, Iraq, and ultimately earned the rank of Sergeant.

After his military career, Ricky continued his dedication to serving his country and community by becoming a professional firefighter. While certainly commendable, the experiences took a toll on him. Because he was battling PTSD, Ricky endured severe depression and anger in the years that followed his military service.

But as the proverb says, "It's always darkest before the dawn," and so it was for Ricky. He met his wife Ivy, who became his anchor while helping him navigate through his struggles. It was through the birth of their son that Ricky found solace and a renewed sense of purpose. Embracing spirituality, Ricky discovered a path of healing and personal growth, replacing his anger and depression with acts of kindness and giving back to others.

Entrepreneurial Spirit

Motivated by a desire to defy statistics, and inspired by his wife and children, Ricky sought to make a difference beyond his firefighting career.

Together with Ivy, he founded a company called "What the Effingham." Although facing some criticism from the community for the company's name, Ricky's goal was to shed the negative stigma surrounding their beautiful county and transform it into a place of positivity and enjoyment. While he understood he couldn't please everyone, Ricky found fulfillment in the happiness of those who supported their endeavors.

Continuing his entrepreneurial spirit, Ricky and Ivy, alongside their friend Zac Hayes from Savannah Fire, established Railyard Media after purchasing and renovating the building now known as The Railyard on Laurel Street in downtown Springfield. The venture aims to assist small businesses on a budget in creating media and establishing their online presence to help support small business growth in the area.

Furthermore, Ricky's passion for old things and his affinity for Early American days led him to open 13 Stars, a themed venue with a speak-easy flair in the back of The Railyard. It's where he can both indulge his love for antiques and provide a popular gathering spot for Springfield families.

> "It's important not to give up and to try and reach out because help is available. I am available, others are available, and we are willing to do whatever it takes."



Real Estate

Balancing his firefighting career with real estate, Ricky's hard work and dedication paid off, allowing him to pursue careers that both provided for his family and benefited the community.

With a knack for interior design and a love for unique styles, Ricky and Ivy invested in several projects, becoming successful Airbnb hosts. The joy they found in renovating and decorating these spaces added a touch of magic to their guests' experiences. (The full list of the short-term vacation rentals can be found at www.southerndestinationrentals.com)

Through Ivy's expertise in mortgages and finance, Ricky utilized his VA benefits and fulfilled even more of the American dream. Today, as a full-time realtor at Sherman & Hemstreet/Southern Georgia Homes, he says he finds his work very satisfying, especially as it allows him to extend a hand and help others. His advice for buyers in today's current market is to "Go ahead and make a move. The price may go down but it's more than likely that the price of homes will continue to go up, so now is as good a time as any to make that lifetime investment."

A career in real estate is also a good bet as he says, "We are a recession proof industry, especially in this high growth market." Passionate about our area, he welcomes any and all inquiries regarding real estate, from folks who are ready to buy/ sell to those who are just starting to think about it. "Call me, you may be very surprised as to what we can do together," he says. "Let's talk!"

A Helping Hand for Vets

In this real estate position, Ricky is also a Military Relocation Specialist. He says when someone transitions out of the military, they don't necessarily get the full picture of what resources are available to them as a veteran.

"Most people leaving military service do not have a full understanding of VA benefits. Basically, a vet has to do

their own research, and it's very helpful to reach out to fellow vets."

He urges vets to call him, with no expectation or intention of buying or selling real estate, because "I am here to be a resource. My dad did that for me, and I want to get other vets on the same path."

His own journey of personal growth made him acutely aware of the challenges faced by individuals battling PTSD, depression, and alcoholism. With empathy born from experience, Ricky aspires to become a counselor for those struggling with these issues, providing the support and guidance he wishes he had during his darkest moments. He says "It's important not to give up and to try and reach out because help is available. I am available, others are available, and we are willing to do whatever it takes. "

> "Your goal is to compete with the person you were yesterday. Don't compare yourself with others."

Reflecting on the past two decades, Ricky emphasizes the importance of self-care and cherishing loved ones. His message to anyone suffering is one of hope, resilience, and the power of seeking proper support.

"Your goal is to compete with the person you were yesterday. Don't compare yourself with others" he says. With an abundance of resources available, both physical and spiritual, Ricky urges individuals to "Take it one step at a time and not give up. Reach out, ask questions and you will discover the help you need."

Local Life

"I really enjoy the culture found here. I appreciate that many of us want progress and growth but not at the expense of losing our uniqueness and our 'mom and pop' businesses."

Ricky says he loves finding the little towns that still dot the Georgia countryside. "Being in a small town that takes pride in its history and culture gives me hope for the future. We are so blessed to still have places to go and get away from the big city vibe."

Ricky's love of his community has also led him to volunteer in several different capacities, most recently as the Vice Chair at the Effingham YMCA, and the Vice Chair for the Downtown Development Authority in Springfield. He particularly loves projects that benefit children and downtown Springfield.

And as busy as they are, Ricky and Ivy make time for daily trips to the gym and lots of family fun. "We like to discover new places we haven't been before, and we like hosting friends and having parties because we enjoy people. Being with good people and seeing new things—that's what brings us joy."

And building renovation. Ricky and Ivy are working on their sixth renovation, and he says "I love hearing the stories from previous owners about the houses they grew up in, homes I feel fortunate to be able to renovate and breathe new life into."

Having come such a long way, Ricky's extraordinary journey now illuminates the way for others. His inspirational story proves that with determination, support and the willingness to transform oneself, it is possible to overcome life's challenges and find the path to a brighter future.

"If I can do it, you can do it" he says, "And reach out because I know we can do it together." ■







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ReStore of Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County to Host Customer Appreciation Day

Since opening in 2006, the ReStore of Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County has provided a source for affordable building supplies, appliances, furniture and household goods. The store is stocked in part with donations from residents and businesses who bring in their surplus materials.

You might not know that there are some items that can be purchased brand new from the ReStore. The ReStore has a partnership with Georgia Power to offer a selection of energy efficient LED light bulbs in various sizes and affordable prices. They also get periodic shipments of unopened paint and pallets full of new flooring that can cover full rooms.

Savvy shoppers know that the ReStore's stock changes frequently and to keep an eye on their Facebook and Instagram for posts about new arrivals. Items like outdoor storage and patio furniture are especially popular.

The ReStore is full of great finds but as an open space without air conditioning, it can get hot in the summer. They recently added an HVAC system to the store to create a more pleasant shopping experience for their customers and they are currently fundraising to offset the cost.

"We appreciate the support of our partners who make it possible for us to build homes for local families and provide affordable pathways to home ownership," says Jimmy Rutland, president/CEO of Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County. "Shopping at the ReStore funds homes, community and hope."

> "Shopping at the ReStore funds homes, community and hope."

As a show of appreciation to their customers, donors and volunteers, the ReStore will host its annual customer appreciation day August 19. The team will be serving up free cookout cuisine and giving away some fantastic raffle prizes donated by community partners. In previous years, prizes have included gift baskets, outdoor furniture and cash. Raffle tickets will be sold for $2 each during ReStore hours until 2pm, August 19, and the winners will be drawn after that.

"The customer appreciation party is our way of thanking everyone who has supported us over the years," says ReStore manager Kait Rapp. "We look forward to welcoming everyone!"

Keep an eye on Habitat of Humanity of Effingham County's social media platforms for updates on customer appreciation day, including sneak peeks at the raffle prizes available.

If you can't make it to the customer appreciation day, consider signing up for a volunteer shift or donating items to the ReStore. Every Wednesday-Saturday, volunteers can help with tasks at the ReStore, including stocking, cleaning, organizing and office support. Volunteers can sign up individually or as a group using the QR code.

Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County

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ASHLEY BOYETTE, STATE FARM INSURANCE

"We protect families and plan futures," says **Ashley Boyette**, State Farm Insurance Agent. "My main focus is to make sure we protect what is important to you. From auto to home to life insurance, together we can take care of what matters most in your life."

Taking care of her customers is what Ashley does best. She finds solutions and presents options that benefit you. She says life insurance is one such area, "Life insurance is where we can be a beacon of light during a time of trauma and loss by providing much needed funds when tragedy strikes." Life insurance proceeds can pay off debts that might otherwise leave your loved ones in a difficult position. Ashley can work with you to find a policy that ensures your family can stay in their home, something she is passionate about. "Spending as little as $20 a month buys peace of mind," she says, "And we can settle the death claim within five days." She welcomes small business owners and would love to help them offer a benefits package to their employees.

And no need to worry about any fees because, "my services are completely free of charge, all day, everyday. An inquiry is free. A quote is free," says Ashley. "Give me the opportunity to serve you, and if it doesn't fit now, we can talk again down the road and see if it fits later."

Ashley is a graduate of Georgia Southern University and is a longtime Effingham County resident. "Come see me and take advantage of my local knowledge and our great customer service, where we treat all our customers like family." Being local means Ashley sees her customers in town, at community events and while volunteering at Habitat for Humanity, the Rotary Club, and the Effingham County Chamber of Commerce. She says, "I love all the opportunities that our small businesses offer, from yoga studios to restaurants. Our area is growing by leaps and bounds. And it is such a wonderful community to be part of with great opportunities and new people here everyday."

Ashley Boyette's State Farm Insurance is a customer focused office where the friendly and knowledgeable staff is ready to serve you. Ashley says. "Give us the opportunity to earn your business. Call us today!"



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Our Community Celebrates These Veterans/ First Responders (as nominated by our readers)



BRIAN SCOTT SAXON, Guyton

Tell us about your family.
I have been married to my beautiful wife for 14 years and we have 3 wonderful kids. Our oldest daughter Jordan Saxon-Capwell lives in Atlanta with her husband, is a SCAD graduate, and works in the movie industry as an assistant to the Unit Production Manager. My son Jake is 13 and is my sports buddy in all areas. He attends Savannah Christian and is a member of the football team and middle school baseball team. My youngest daughter Sarah attends Guyton Elementary School. Her hobbies are tumbling, gymnastics and chorus. Both Jake and Sarah are on the dean's list. All is made possible by my wife who has held things together through deployments and other job-related duties all while serving the community as well. She is a 5th grade teacher at Guyton Elementary School. She has been teaching for more than 20 years and is the glue that keeps everything going.

What branch of service were you in or what organization do you work for?
After graduating high school, I joined the Georgia Air National Guard to serve my state and country, but also to learn a skill that would benefit me in the future. I used the GI Bill to pay for higher education but more importantly I learned the discipline to accomplish the goals that I had set for myself. At 21, I became a Deputy Sheriff for the Chatham County Sheriff's Department and worked there for 7 years. I moved into an active-duty role with the GA Air National Guard (165th AW and CRTC) and spent another 20+ years moving up to the rank of Chief Master Sergeant. I served as the Chief Enlisted Manager until I retired in December 2019. From there, I took a Title 5 federal position as the Facility Manager and Federal Resource Advisor for the 165th AW Civil Engineering squadron where I work today.

How do you give back to the community?
In Effingham County, I have coached football, basketball, baseball, and soccer for the county and the City of Rincon. My goal has always been to teach the fundamentals of the game and to make sure that the kids are learning the same life lessons I took from the coaches who taught me at an early age. I had always said if I were not in the current position, I would enjoy working with kids in this capacity on a full-time basis.

What is your most memorable experience during your time of service?
The most memorable experience is the many faces and places I served with my fellow airmen and other soldiers. I had the opportunity to serve on a detail to celebrate the 73rd anniversary of D-Day in France. The places I saw and the veterans I spoke with will remain with me. The sacrifices of these men and women are incredible and I was lucky enough to be able to have a part of that history in my career.

What would you tell others about serving your community?
I think we are all blessed to live in the greatest country ever, but there is an obligation for us all to give back however we can to make our towns, communities, states or country a better place. There is no specific way to serve your community, rather find something that fits with you and gives you a feeling of wanting to do it, not having to do it. Whether it is military service, first responders, police, fire department, board members, teacher, mentor, coach, church volunteer or many other ways, find a way to serve. The main goal is to just be involved in whatever way makes our community a place others want to live and grow their families.



JENNIFER ASHDOWN, Rincon

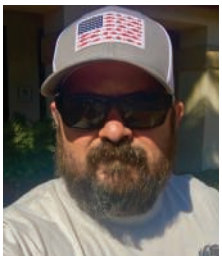
Tell us about your family.
I have a 17-year-old daughter, Ansley Wright. She is a senior at Effingham College and Career Academy and is part of the drum line for ECHS. My son, Andrew Irish, passed away in January 2022. I have an 11-month-old granddaughter, Adelyn.

What organization do you work for?
I am a Lieutenant for Effingham County Fire Services.

How do you give back to the community?
In addition to serving my community through the fire service, I have volunteered my time to coach girls' volleyball with Effingham County Recreation Department as well as Effingham Elite Volleyball Club.

What is your most memorable experience during your time of service?
There have been numerous memorable experiences during my 17 years with Effingham Fire. However, I would have to say that the relationships that I have built and the family that I have gained over the years has offered some of the best memories. Not only at ECFR, but the Georgia Fire Academy, SERTC in Colorado, and all the local fire departments. There's nothing better than family.

What would you tell others about serving your community?
Selfless service is so very rewarding. Never underestimate the power of a smile, a touch, or a kind word. I had an EMT instructor years ago that instilled in me to treat everyone like I would want my 90-year-old grandmother treated. That stuck with me and is how I treat citizens while on runs. I can't imagine doing anything other than serving my community and helping those in need. It's what I was born to do.



JOSHUA WRIGHT, Springfield

Tell us about your family.
I come from a large, blended family with four brothers, one sister, and 18 nieces and nephews. My wife and I have been married 15 years. We have four children, a daughter and three boys—Macee, Kaden, Landen, and Ayden. I believe our close relationships and support are crucial to our success—we rely on each other for advice and assistance. I am most grateful for my wife, Heather. She has stood by my side through thick and thin and always supported me.

What branch of service were you in?
I served in the United States Army and Air Force.

How do you give back to the community?
We give back through our businesses and volunteering when and where we can. We own Wright Wicks and Whisky Wood Custom Products. We are continually involved with local schools, charities, or anywhere we can be through fundraisers, donations, and even ourselves. One of our favorites was being part of an effort to pay the school lunch debt off for all of Effingham County.

What is your most memorable experience during your time of service?
My tours to Iraq and Afghanistan. The opportunity to experience the events and people there. It was a humbling and eye-opening experience. It has given me a greater appreciation and love for my country and our opportunities here.

What would you tell others about serving your community?
Giving back to our community and residents is a great feeling. It offers a sense of responsibility and accountability to your home. You affect lives and organizations that may not have happened without your support, and you know you did something that matters.



JEFFREY LEIN, Springfield

Tell us about your family.
I have been married to my wife Brittany Lein (Art Teacher at Springfield Elementary School) since 2015. My oldest son, Wyatt, is a graduate of Effingham County High School ; Mason is 16 and a junior at ECHS; Colt is 4 and will start Pre-K at SES this year; our daughter, Hadley, is 2.

What branch of service were you in?
I served in the US Army from 2006–2013 and was stationed at Ft. Stewart. I served in Iraq in 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010 and 2011. I was a 91B Wheeled Vehicle Mechanic.

How do you give back to the community?
I recently started my own trailer and chassis repair business called Veteran Fleet Services. I hire veterans in hopes of giving them purpose in life. Many of them struggle after getting out due to once having a rank, title, position, or authority then joining the civilian sector and none of that matters. It's like starting over, and some feel they were once important and are now at the bottom of the totem pole. My goal is to hire at least two more veterans by the end of the year. I am also planning to start a nonprofit to take veterans and first responders offshore fishing.

What is your most memorable experience during your time of service?
My most memorable experience was my last deployment to COB Adder, Iraq. I was assigned to the 632nd Maintenance Company out of Ft. Stewart. We conducted field-level maintenance, force protection, convoy security missions, combat recovery operations as well as other services for COB Adder. I worked the night shift at the Motor Pool. The squad I had was like my family. We did everything together, from going to the gym to going to the chow hall. The bond we all made as brothers still exists today.

What would you tell others about serving your community?
Serving your community is a selfless service that anyone can provide. Whether it's coaching a kids' sports team or volunteering your time when others are in need, serving your community not only builds a better you, but also builds a better community.



CHRISTOPHER AGUAYO, Rincon

Tell us about your family.
I have a wife and two wonderful boys, ages 2 and soon-to-be 4 months old.

What branch of service were you in or what organization do you work for?
I served in the US Army.

How do you give back to the community?
In 2011, I founded Task Force Legion Milsim a non-tax exempt veteran nonprofit that aids veterans dealing with PTSD through paintball.

What is your most memorable experience during your time of service?
The camaraderie and brotherhood with my fellow soldiers.

What would you tell others about serving your community?
It's a humbling experience and I challenge more veterans to get involved in their local communities and beyond.

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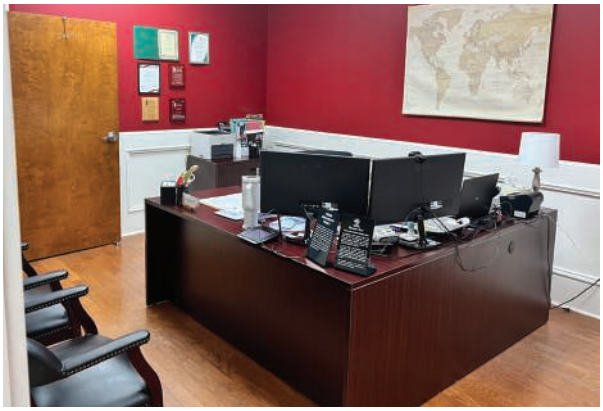
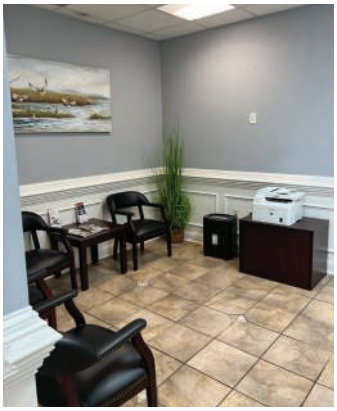


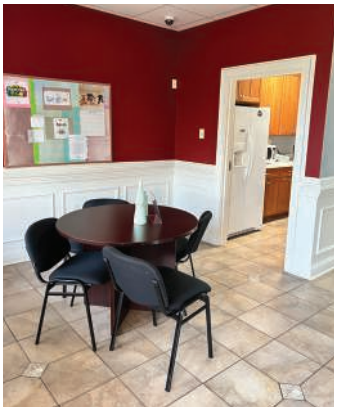
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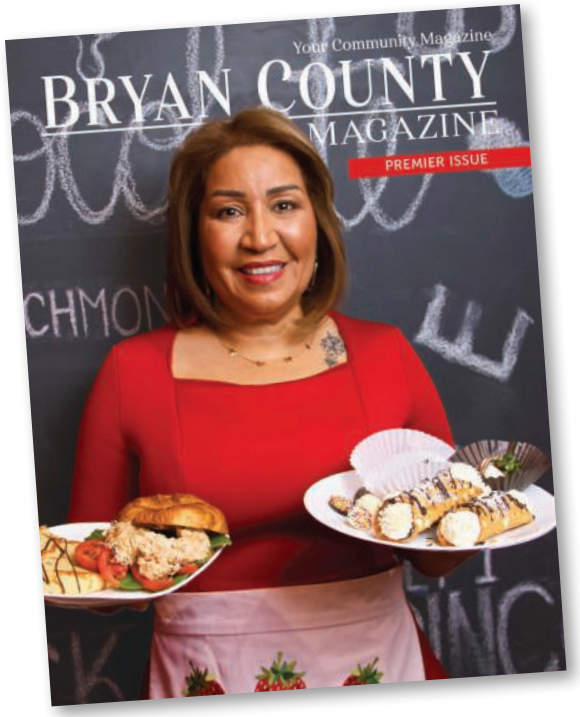
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ROBERT ATKINS

Bringing Comic Art Full Circle

Story by Cindy Reid
Photography by Leidy Lester

G.I. Joe Transformers. Spider-man. X-Men. Fantastic Four. Shut your eyes and you can picture each one of these characters. That's how deeply they are embedded in our imagination.

But where do the images, the details, the actual drawings come from? Obviously from an artist's hand, but whose? In this case the artist is local resident and SCAD Professor Robert Atkins, who has been drawing these iconic characters for many years.

Origin Story

Born and raised in Jacksonville, Illinois, Robert earned his undergraduate degree from Illinois State in Fine Art before moving to Savannah to attend Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD).

"I was a real Midwest kid when I first came to Savannah, so it was a bit of a culture shock," he says. "But that's where I learned how to do comics."

After he received his M.F.A. in Sequential Art from SCAD in 2005, Robert and his wife Laura relocated to North Carolina where he got his first introduction to professional work.

"Right out of school, a professor introduced me to professional contacts, and it was Randy Green from X-Men who gave me my start. I love comics and I love storytelling," he says.

After getting his start with backgrounds, Robert moved quickly to penciling his own art.

"A penciller takes the script and decides how it will all look, from the characters to appropriate props," he says. "For eight years, I worked full time with Marvel, DC, IDW drawing GI Joe, Transformers, Ninja turtles, all the 80s characters I grew up with. I was loving it and doing exactly what I wanted to do."

G.I. Joe: A Real American Hero

Many characters are called iconic, but few can match the long run of G.I. Joe, which has been both a comic strip and comic book





in every decade since 1942. Robert's long running relationship with G.I. Joe began when he accepted his first professional solo work illustrating "Snake Eyes: Declassified" for comic book publisher Devil's Due.

Since then, he has illustrated 70 consecutive G.I. Joe related covers from 2008-2012 and more than 130 G.I. Joe related comic covers in total. Robert is the lead artist on Renegade Game Studios G.I. Joe board games and deck building games and a contributing artist for role playing games.

"I grew up on those characters," Robert says. "They are both a passion and nostalgia for me. G.I. Joe has a huge fan base of soldiers and vets and for some it is the only comic they read. It's important to me that it looks believable. I do my best to be true to the work."

Robert subsequently became widely known for his penciling work on military action in superhero titles such as Amazing Spider-Man, Venom and Heroes for Hire.

America's Army

Based on the highly successful PC game, the America's Army comic series was the official comic book series from the United States Army. Published by IDW publication, it was available for free online and in print at Army bases and recruiting centers. Based on his success with G.I. Joe, Robert was asked to draw multiple issues for the series.

"The military wanted to produce a comic that was somewhat historical and also reflected soldiers' real life," Robert says. "Because it was for the Army, a Lt. Colonel was my boss and it had to be accurate, which meant many revisions. It was actually twice as hard as G.I. Joe."

Using visual aids such as toy tanks, Robert reproduced the detail of equipment used by soldiers.

"I have great respect for soldiers, and I appreciate those that serve," says Robert, "I have been honored to be a part of both G.I. Joe and America's Army."

New Venues

After years of successful comic work, Robert wanted to challenge himself and create a business model that would build his brand as a freelancer.

"I wasn't pushing myself artistically, so I began my blog and started drawing a daily sketch. For a full year I posted a new drawing every day," he says.

The blog quickly built a fan base, which caught the attention of toy manufacturers Hasbro and Mattel and led to toy package artwork.

Robert says, "There are a lot of revisions in toy product illustration, which is very different from comics where you just want to meet the deadline."





And unlike comics, there are no artist credits on toy package art. Robert has worked on more than 40 package art illustrations—including NERF, Star Wars: Black Series action figures, Marvel Legends, and many others—and says it has been a wonderful experience.

In addition to toy package art, Robert is a freelance illustrator for Playful Studios video games, RPG and board games for Renegade Game Studios LLC and other comic publishers.

"The last few years since beginning work at SCAD, I have spent more time doing concept art for video games and art for board games as that can fit into my schedule better," he says.

> "I have great respect for soldiers, and I appreciate those that serve. I have been honored to be a part of both G.I. Joe and America's Army."

Back to SCAD

While busy as a working artist, Robert also developed curriculum and taught online art courses for Comics Experience for seven years. When SCAD reached out to offer him a teaching position, Robert says it was an opportunity to achieve his longtime career goal to teach at the university level. While he and his family were living in Springfield, Illinois, and "fully expected to stay there forever," he accepted the position and in January 2018 they moved to Guyton.

Robert is in the Sequential Art Department at SCAD, teaching comics, storyboards and concept art. He says his professional experiences make him a better professor.

"It is a great teaching environment and my experiences in comic, package, and video art mean I can teach my students the differences in my industry. I can teach the art and also the pitfalls so it's helpful for students."

"I am living my dream to be able to work in my industry and also pay it forward by following my students and helping them all the way through," he says. "Stephen Sholty, is a SCAD student that I worked with and taught sequential classes both in Savannah and in the SCAD Lacoste Campus in France in 2019. He graduated later that year and we worked on refining his portfolio, character design and 3d modeling, which landed him a full time job designing toys for Hasbro on their Marvel Super Heroes and Dungeons and Dragons figures. It's very cool when it all comes full circle."

Faith & Family

Robert also serves as Bishop of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, which meets at 903 Fort Howard Rd. in Rincon. The role is a non-paid position with the church, it's all lay clergy—meaning it runs on service.

"It wasn't a position I applied for or asked to do, I was brought in by our Stake President, or regional leadership, and asked to serve," he says. "I've served as a counselor in three previous Bishoprics and now for two years as the Bishop here." Robert stresses, "It's not just me, I also have a lot of help in our church."

He says when people are going through hard times, he tries to be a sounding board and a resource to give spiritual guidance and counsel whenever possible. He says, "I want people to know you are not alone, you always have a Savior and a heavenly Father who loves you and who you can rely on."

He and his wife Laura—a teacher at Sandhill Elementary School—have two teenage children, Connor and Emma. The family loves living in the Savannah area and enjoys being outdoors and exploring the state parks. As busy as they are, Robert says, "We are dedicated to eating dinner every night at our table as a family. It helps keep our family close and our children know we are there for them."

Between art, teaching, faith and family, "Needless to say, I wear a lot of hats, but all of them are very fulfilling and teach me new insights into life each day." ■

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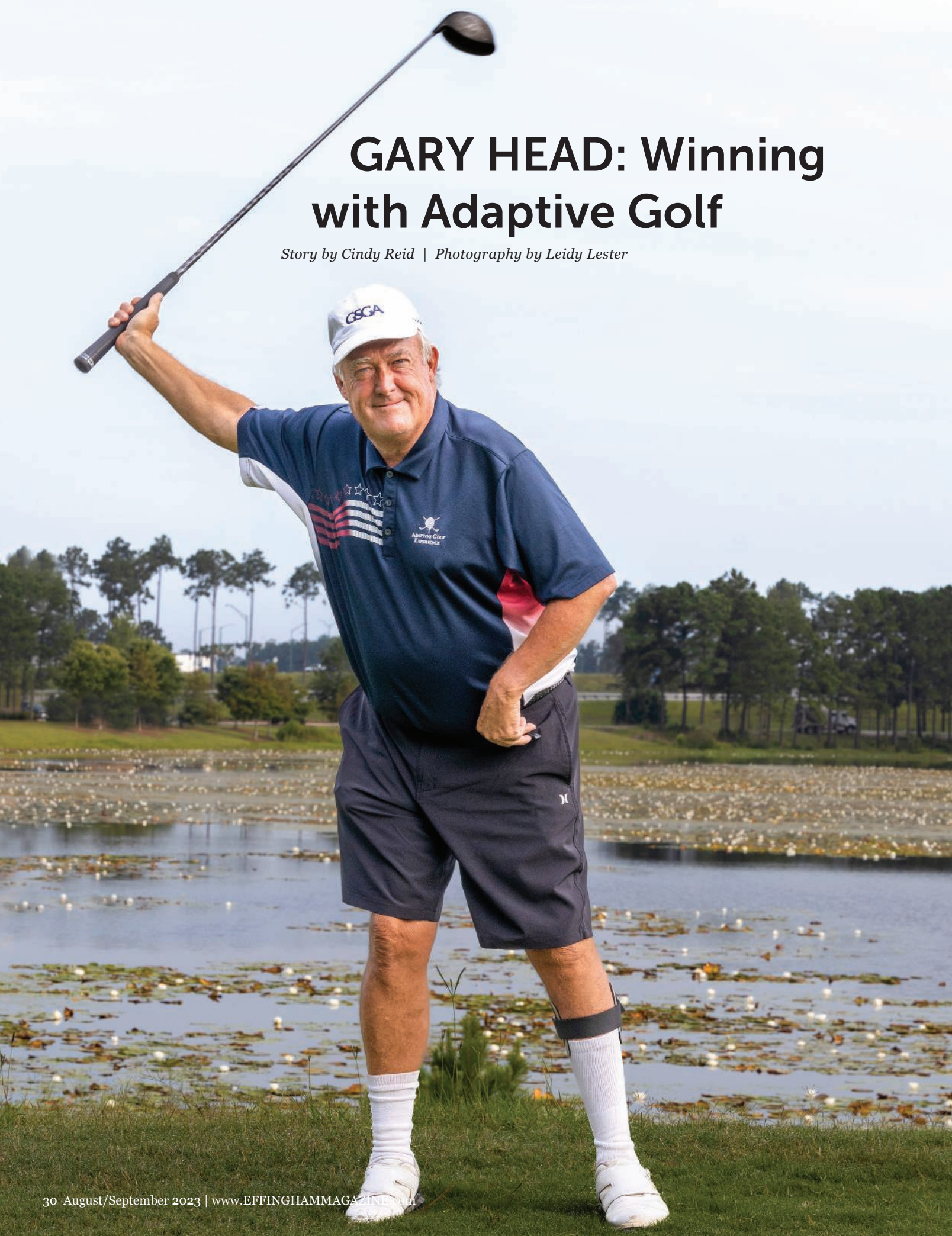
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GARY HEAD: Winning with Adaptive Golf

Story by Cindy Reid | Photography by Leidy Lester





Guyton resident Gary Head has two passions—playing golf and helping others play golf. Paralyzed on one side of his body due to two strokes before he was forty, Gary never dreamed he would one day compete athletically. Typically a hard charging over achiever, after his second stroke he was grateful to learn how to tie his shoes and button his shirt. Gary's life journey has taken him from struggling to achieve basic life skills to being the U.S. Adaptive Golf Alliance (USAGA) #1 ranked Senior One Arm Golfer in the country.

"Adaptive golf has become my joy and my passion," says Gary. "I compete around the country in USGA,USAGA and GSGA tournaments against other one armed and physically handicapped golf players. More importantly I volunteer to help others learn what has brought so much to my life."

Adaptive Golf

Like many adaptive sports, adaptive golf allows people with disabilities to play the game of golf through modified rules or equipment based upon the person's abilities. Through innovation and collaboration within the adaptive community, USAGA members have been able to adapt golf for everyone. This is regardless of current health, physical, mental, sensory, coping and wellbeing status. USAGA helps to bring inclusion to those wanting to learn golf by offering clinics to show them the game through clinics.

There are two Adaptive Golf locations locally—one in Savannah and one in Beaufort, SC. Both run monthly clinics using physical therapy and specialized equipment. No prior golf experience is needed. Participants can learn the game of golf or brush up on old skills. Specialized equipment including golf carts that can come into an upright standing position, as well as golf clubs, are provided. Both programs are entirely free of charge to all participants.

> "In addition to golf, the monthly clinics offer something else of value—camaraderie."

Veterans and civilians are welcome at both clinics. Due to the large population of active duty and retired military personnel in the area, many vets participate. The program helps those with challenges that range from stroke, amputee, brain/spine injury, multiple sclerosis, joint replacements, cerebral palsy, Parkinsons, macular degeneration, spina bifida, vision/hearing impairments, orthopedic, arthritic issues, joint replacement, and more.

In addition to golf, the monthly clinics offer something else of value—camaraderie. For many dealing with disabilities, social isolation is very real.

"It can feel like there aren't any 'people like us' out there," says Gary. "But come to a clinic and you will soon find out that there are many of us!"

Clinics typically host 50 to 70 participants with a wide range of physical challenges.

Many adaptive golfers take their new skills and play with friends and families in between clinics. Some, like Gary, start competing in adaptive tournaments. The best players in the country can then track their progress within their sports classification in the USAGA Rankings & Standards.

In the Rough

Gary took the long way around to residing in the south. Born and raised

in Long Island, NY, his family moved to Savannah when he was a teenager.

"I started a temp agency while in Armstrong College, which I ran for ten years before selling," he says. "And I then took a job flying for Key Air. Their headquarters was in Savannah and I was a chief flight attendant."

Gary relocated to New York after the airline went out of business, where he met his wife Nancy, and after marriage the couple made their home in New York.

On the morning of Sept 11, 2001, Gary—who was now a partner in a recruiting firm in New York City—was waiting for a client in the lobby of World Trade Center Tower One.

"I was there in the lobby, when the plane hit. I wanted to help, I kept thinking I needed to help people, but in doing so I did the worst thing I could have done, which was to go outside and see the horrific scene of people jumping and falling from the building," he says.

Six months later, he had his first stroke, which was not related to 9/11, but was in fact due to a heart deformity. Gary subsequently had another stroke which was much worse and left him in a coma. He has had full left side paralysis since 2002.

"I will never get the use of my left side back so I learned to adapt. After overachieving my whole life I was now incapable of even driving myself. My wonderful wife Nancy taught me how to tie my shoes, button my clothes, and so much more. They say 'necessity is the mother of invention,' and I chose to make the best of what I could do."

Back On the Greens

By now most of Gary's family had moved back to Savannah so eventually he and Nancy did as well. "I was visiting my brother, who plays golf. I used to like to play and I still loved the beauty and serenity of the course. My brother put a club in my hands and I hit a ball! From there I became focused on trying to play the game. In between games I would practice my hitting."

After being introduced to Adaptive Golf by Ed Gizara at the Fort Stewart golf course, Gary became a regular at the Adaptive Golf Experience at The Legends at Parris Island golf course in Beaufort, South Carolina.

> "In honor of his dedicated service Gary was awarded Volunteer of the Year from Adaptive Golf Experience of Parris Island."

"I looked forward to the monthly clinics to play with others with disabilities and getting the sense of satisfaction as a disabled person to keep up with the 'norms'. I started to become good and I became passionate about competing and helping others."

He says his two coaches urged him to become a competitive golfer with the USAGA, which hosts Adaptive Golf competitions.

"They rank golfers for sanctioned tournaments, both nationally and worldwide. I am currently ranked number ten in my Sports Class overall and number one in the Senior portion."

Giving Back and Outreach to Vets

Gary says Adaptive Golf has become his passion, especially helping others. In honor of his dedicated service Gary was awarded Volunteer of the Year from Adaptive Golf Experience of Parris Island.

"I was very surprised and proud," he says. "I am now getting payback in my heart from others in my shoes, and it's very meaningful to me."

Currently Gary is the Clinic Coordinator of Adaptive Golf Savannah at Crosswinds Golf Club, in Pooler. He stresses that no golf experience is necessary to participate and the entire program is free of charge.

"We provide golf clubs, training aids, range balls ,on-course learning and Solorider and Paragolfer adaptive golf carts. We work on swings and after the clinic we play a round of golf, either 3, 9, or 18 holes."

They outreach to veteran organizations and rehab clinics both in person or via email.

"A lot of vets come to our clinics, it's very popular in our area, and the rehab at Ft. Stewart refers many clients. If nothing else, come for the camaraderie and see what it's all about."

Gary says for him, golf is really a family affair. "Nancy is the Marketing Director at Rincon Golf Course—she has been there 14 years—and our son Thomas, who recently graduated with an MA from Emory University, enjoys golfing so it's easy for us. Because I compete in tournaments my wife and I go on golf road trips all over America. The game of golf is embedded in me as my passion."

For Gary, and so many others, Adaptive Golf has hit a Hole-In-One! ■

LOCAL ADAPTIVE GOLF PROGRAMS

Adaptive Golf Savannah is located at Crosswinds Golf Club (232 James B. Blackburn Dr Pooler GA) This complimentary all-inclusive community golf program is powered by the Georgia State Golf Association. It is designed for any and all physically challenged citizens, and injured/ disabled military veterans of all generations. Adaptive Golf Savannah is open to Special Needs Youth, with no age limit but parents or guardians must stay with the child for the entire time. The clinic is held on the second Thursday of every month, November through March, from 3:30 to 5:50 PM. Check out Adaptive Golf Savannah on Facebook

Adaptive Golf Experience of Parris Island is located at The Legends Golf Course at Parris Island, 14 Belleau Wood Rd, MCRD Parris Island, SC 29905. They offer monthly clinics for veterans and civilians throughout the Lowcountry with physical disabilities or challenges. Participants receive complimentary instruction on both the full golf swing and putting, taught by experienced professional golf instructors, fellow adaptive athletes and helpful volunteers. The program is open to adult participants only. Adaptivegolfexperience.org





Nancy and Gary Head

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How a Nutritional Therapist Can Help With Your Autoimmune Disease

By Kerri Dodson, MNT, MCHWC, Master Nutrition Therapist



Kerri Dodson, *Master Nutrition Therapist, Master Health and Wellness Coach*

Autoimmune Disease Statistics

Almost 4% of the world's population suffers with an autoimmune disease—approximately 5-8% of the US population is affected. That is about 50 million Americans with autoimmune diseases, striking women three times more often than men. In addition, if you have one autoimmune disease, the likelihood of developing a second is very high. The most common autoimmune diseases include multiple sclerosis, type 1 diabetes, lupus, rheumatoid arthritis, Crohn's disease, psoriasis, scleroderma, IBS, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome and some types of Alzheimer's. There are 80 known autoimmune diseases.

What is Autoimmune Disease?

Autoimmune disease is a condition in which a person's immune system functions incorrectly, resulting in problems in the body. In effect, the immune system is attacking your body when its job is to protect you. With autoimmune disease, the immune system sees the cells of the body as foreign and begins to attack the cells.

Why do People Develop Autoimmune Disease?

We know three different factors that make someone more prone to developing an autoimmune disease. First is a genetic pre-disposition—one or several family members have had an autoimmune disease. Second, a trigger—this could be anything from a traumatic accident, emotional trauma, virus, or serious illness. Lastly, a leaky gut—as a Nutritional Therapist, I cannot change your genetics or take away your trigger, however, I can help you heal your leaky gut.

How Can a Nutritional Therapist Help with Your Autoimmune Disease?

Leaky gut—also known as gut permeability—means that the junctions of the gut epithelial wall lose their integrity, which allows for material (food, bacteria etc.) from the gut to enter into the bloodstream. This material causes the immune system to become chronically inflamed and overactive. Over time, the immune system loses its ability to recognize which cells it should be fighting, and which cells need to be protected. This is when autoimmunity occurs.

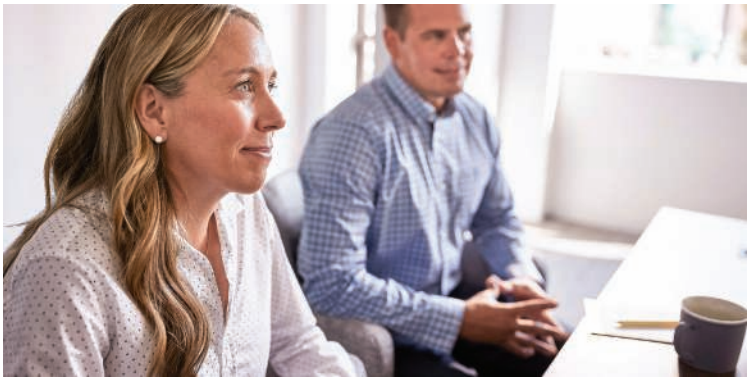
As a Nutrition Therapist, I can assist with specific nutritional protocols that will remove inflammatory foods, stop damage to the gut lining, allow the inflammation to calm down and then heal the gut lining. These protocols include non-inflammatory, non-immune trigger foods along with specific supplementation.

Different autoimmune diseases require different protocols and lifestyle adjustments. With a step-by-step approach to your specific autoimmune disease, I can assist you in helping your body heal by stopping the damage being done by your immune system and possible reversing the damage that has been done. The most important aspect is that you will feel better, have reduced inflammation, more energy and feel like your old self. It is possible to be in control of your autoimmune disease with whole food protocols and supplementation.



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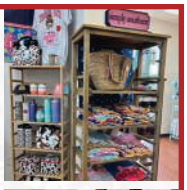
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BADCOCK HOME FURNITURE & MORE
Rincon and Pooler Locations

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."

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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:

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- 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.

For more information, visit www.badcock.com.

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"We approach every customer with a servant's heart; eager to assist with honesty and integrity throughout the entire process," Jamie Pratt says.

In addition to expert roofing services, Patriot Pros offers siding, windows, doors, gutters and fencing services as well. This allows the team to continue their attention to detail and quality to their customers' other home renovation needs and gives homeowners one source to call whenever they have a project that needs attention.

Matt and Jamie Pratt are Rincon residents and love serving the Effingham County community as well as the surrounding areas from Tybee Island to Hilton Head.

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More Than Pest Control

Darrell Dasher

Branch Manager, Rincon Office



Darrell Dasher grew up in the Sand Hill area, so managing the Rincon office of Yates-Astro really is "home" for him. He gives back to his hometown by officiating sports events for all age groups in and around Effingham County.

His influence goes beyond our area through his involvement as a Shriner and a Mason. Shriner Hospitals for children never charge for their services, a blessing that is the result of the work of Darrell and many others. The Children's Home in Macon is an outgrowth of his volunteer work as well.

Darrell considers it a form of "giving back" to his hometown by protecting area homes and businesses as a pest control professional with Yates-Astro. It is hometown people like Darrell Dasher who have made Yates-Astro, a family owned local business, the largest pest control provider in the region.

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Georgia Transformer Corp Celebrates Veterans & First Responders

The transformer market is forecast to grow rapidly over the next decade and here in Effingham County, the **Georgia Transformer Corp. (GTC)** facility is an industry leader in manufacturing industrial large-scale transformers used to support energy reliability and maximize the utilization of clean, renewable energy sources.

But what exactly is a transformer? In simple terms, a transformer transfers electric energy from one alternating-current circuit to one or more other circuits, either increasing or reducing the voltage. A transformer allows electricity to be usable and to travel over long distances, enabling power plants to economically deliver electricity to a wide range of customers. Transformers also ensure the power entering your home is safe for your light bulbs and outlets.

For *Effingham Magazine's* "Salute to Veterans and First Responders" issue, GTC wants to celebrate the many military veterans of their workforce whose invaluable contributions are vital to every part of the plant's manufacturing process.

Meet VTC-GTC

Over the past five decades, **Virginia Transformer Corp. (VTC)** has become the largest U.S.-owned manufacturer of power transformers in North America. Their five North American facilities produce transformers for a variety of applications in utility, renewable energy, industrial, mining, oil and gas, commercial, institutional, specialty, and export markets. Since acquiring GTC in 2015, they have become a valued corporate neighbor in the northern Georgia region, building transformers and providing career paths for many area residents.

Utilizing the company's values of professionalism, fairness, ownership, honesty and hard work, VTC-GTC has created the finest workforce in the power transformer industry and is grateful for the opportunity to thank the many veterans who contribute mightily to the company's success.

Veterans Voices at GTC

Because GTC fosters an environment that values what veterans bring to the workplace, the Georgia facility has veterans in multiple departments, making them an important part of the total workforce. The company's hiring managers are always interested in interviewing veterans and first responders, as their skill sets and traits align well with GTC's needs and values. In fact, GTC recently held a recruiting outreach event at Fort Stewart, GA which resulted in the hiring of veterans.

Robert O'Dell

U.S. Army | Purchasing Manager

"When I first got out of the service, I did not know what I wanted to do, I had to make that transition from military life to a civilian job. I shot artillery for 11 years so that was not a transferable skill. But I started at GTC where I was judged on



merit and potential and ability. My own direct manager really understood and helped me assimilate into the corporate structure. For me this was an amazing opportunity."

Robert says GTC values the leadership and discipline traits instilled in his military service while giving him the ability to grow marketable skills. In his current position he handles procurement, warehousing, deliveries and supply chain management.

He encourages fellow veterans to apply at GTC "because you never know what opportunities are available to you. GTC is an extremely vet-friendly environment."

He says, "I have been here six years and plan on staying because the growth and opportunity is here. We took a chance on each other, and it paid off."

LaToya Wilson

U.S. Army | Warehouse Supervisor



"I was in the Unit Supply Service in the U.S. Army so my skills transferred well to my current position. The military instills certain attitudes and habits in you that work well here, such as punctuality. Work as a team, and remember you are only as strong as your weakest link. Keep a positive attitude and be resilient. Be the best person you can be. Overall GTC is a pretty great place. I would recommend GTC to other vets, because it's a good home to land in."

Darien White

U.S. Army | Warehouse Materials Department

"I have been at GTC over ten years and working in the military helped me in my role here by instilling personal discipline and a strong work ethic. I was a transport specialist in the U.S. Army, which was quite an experience. My favorite part of my job at GTC is interacting with my co-workers. It's the people here that make it special."

Roque Garcia

U.S. Army | Assistant Facility Manager



"I was in the U.S. Army for twenty-three years and was a mechanic for Black Hawk helicopters. I retired as a First Sergeant. After ten months of retirement, I saw a position that looked interesting at GTC, so I sent in my resume and was contacted immediately. It was my first ever job interview. Then I came in to meet the plant manager, and I was really pleased with the whole experience. I started here in October 2022. This was a new environment for my skills, but it's easy to relate because it's all essentially problem-solving skills."

Roque says, "There are vets in many departments here. We think alike and share values of loyalty, duty, personal courage and the 'never quit' ethic. Together there is no problem we can't tackle."

Career Opportunities

Because they are a large manufacturing facility, GTC is always accepting applications. Their pay scale is very competitive with overtime usually available. All positions are full time.

GTC attributes its success in attracting and retaining employees in part to their advanced training program, which includes both classroom and hands-on training. They offer many benefits, including FSA (flexible savings accounts), family medical care benefits, and 401K. The plant's location is an easy commute for most area residents.

With their very competitive options—location, benefits, hourly pay—GTC is a great place to make a career and have the opportunity for promotion from within the growing company.

Bright Future at GTC

VTC is pleased to announce they have manufactured their largest transformer to date: a remarkable 345 MVA transformer for the renewables market. The liquid-filled step-up unit is more than 36 feet long, 25 feet high, 22 feet wide, and weighs more than 542,000 pounds. Produced at the GTC facility, this huge achievement is a testament to the exceptional capabilities and dedication of the Renewables team.

The colossal 345 MVA transformer further establishes GTC as the leader in securing reliable power to the renewables market and is yet another example of VTC's commitment to enabling U.S. manufacturing and increasing the resiliency and reliability of the U.S. electric grid.

VTC-GTC has many goals for the future. They will:

- continue to train their workforce and further reduce lead times.
- pursue growth for all employees as they grow in new markets.
- create more jobs for American workers.

Most importantly, they will do all of this with a specific focus to improve customer experience and overall customer service. U.S. power demand continues to grow, and they will grow with it.

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As your dedicated dentist at iHeart Dental, I understand that dental emergencies can be both alarming and painful. That's why I want to equip you with the knowledge and confidence to navigate these unexpected situations with ease. In this message, we will explore common dental emergencies, their causes, and the crucial steps you can take to protect your oral health.

UNDERSTANDING COMMON DENTAL EMERGENCIES

- **Toothaches:** Severe toothaches may be caused by dental decay, infections, cracked teeth, or gum disease. If you experience intense pain, please contact us to schedule an appointment for a thorough examination. In the meantime, you can rinse your mouth with warm salt water and gently floss around the affected area, and take pain medication if needed. Clove oil is also a great short-term fix for toothaches.
- **Knocked-Out Tooth:** Accidents, sports injuries, or falls can lead to a knocked-out tooth. If this happens, handle the tooth by its crown and don't touch the root, rinse it gently with water if dirty, and try to reinsert it into its socket. If not, keep it submerged in a cup full of your own saliva and visit the dentist immediately. You have only one hour for successful reattachment, so time is of the essence.
- **Chipped or Fractured Teeth:** Accidental falls or biting on hard objects may result in chipped or fractured teeth. If this happens, rinse your mouth with warm salt water, apply a cold compress to reduce swelling, and reach out to us as soon as possible for evaluation and treatment.
- **Lost Dental Restoration:** If a filling, crown, or dental veneer becomes loose or falls out, don't panic. Keep the restoration safe and avoid chewing on the affected side. Contact our office to schedule a prompt appointment for repair or replacement.
- **Dental Abscess:** A dental abscess is a painful, pus-filled swelling around the root of a tooth. Rinse your mouth with warm salt water several times a day and seek immediate dental care to prevent the spread of infection.

A dental emergency can strike at any moment so it's good to be prepared!

EMERGENCY DENTAL PRECAUTIONS:

- **Dental First Aid Kit:** Keep a dental first aid kit at home, including gauze, a small container with a lid, over-the-counter pain relievers, and a dental mirror. These supplies can help you manage minor dental emergencies in a crunch.
- **Contact Information:** Save your dentist's contact information in your phone and keep it easily accessible. In case of a dental emergency, have your dentist's number readily available in order to receive prompt care. iHeart Dental: 912-499-1133

At iHeart Dental, your oral health and well-being are our top priorities. We hope this message empowers you to handle dental emergencies with confidence. Remember that preventive care, regular check-ups, and good oral hygiene are the foundations of a healthy smile. However, accidents can happen, and we are here to support you during any dental emergency. If you ever find yourself in a dental crisis, please don't hesitate to reach out to us immediately.

Stay Safe, Warm Regards and Love to Smile,

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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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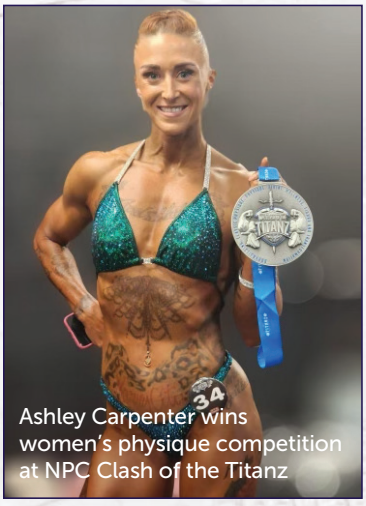


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The 5:30 am morning workout members at Empire Gym


Ashley Carpenter wins women's physique competition at NPC Clash of the Titanz

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