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FAMILIES IN BUSINESS ISSUE



LANDON GEHRKE

Young Entrepreneur Understands the Importance of Giving Back

February/March 2023

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CONTRIBUTORS

1. Jenny Lynn Anderson, a graduate of Georgia Southern University, is a public relations and marketing strategist with 30 years of experience. She authored her first book, *Room 939*, in 2011 and can be found on national stages as an inspirational speaker. Jenny enjoys exercising and spending time in the kitchen.

2. Leidi Lester is a freelance photographer from Bogota Colombia with 8 years experience. She has traveled and worked all over the United States with studios such as Railyard Media. One of her proudest achievements is the work she did with models and highly experienced photographers in Las Vegas.

3. Erich Perez and his wife, Dr. Misty Seale are owners of iHeart Dental in Rincon. Erich's other role is Founder and president of Kronos Media Productions and K&R Studios in Rincon. They specialize in videography and photography as well as sound and recording. Erich and his wife are avid Jeep enthusiasts and have 5 American Bulldogs. You can check them out at @gods.of.dogs on Instagram.

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

5. Daniel Rock is the owner of Rock Media Productions and Founder & Vice President of K&R Studios in Rincon. Daniel and his wife Danielle moved to Georgia from New York in 2005. They have two children. Daniel also enjoys writing and recording his own music.

6. Emily Roscher is a lifestyle and real estate photographer, originally from Northern, VA. She found a love for photography as a hobby about 15 years ago, but started up her businesses in the last 4 years. When she isn't behind the camera, she enjoys finding local coffee shops, and exploring new places with her husband and 4 kids.

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

8. Katrice Williams is a married mother of two. She graduated from Georgia Southern University with a Business Administration Degree. She later decided to pursue her writing interests. Katrice appreciates the Lord Jesus Christ and the many blessings He has bestowed upon her. She loves spending time with her family.

9. Laura Zielinski is a freelance graphic designer specializing in print design. With more than 16 years experience, Laura enjoys shaping stories through meaningful design. When she's not working, she loves spending time with her husband Keith and their three beautiful children, Alli, Matthew and Claire.

10. 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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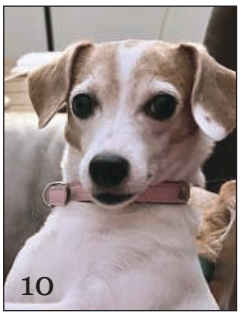

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Jan Southern, DPA
CEO/Publisher



Penny Redmond
Distribution



Christie Wilson
Director of Advertising



Devin Hollingsworth
Account Executive



Lexi Rockwell
Marketing Assistant

Your Community Magazine
EFFINGHAM
MAGAZINE

PUBLISHER
Jan Southern
Jan@JDelSURMarketing.com
912-318-8645

CLIENT SERVICES
Christie Wilson, Director of Advertising
Christie@JDelSURMarketing.com
Devin Hollingsworth, Account Executive
Devin@JDelSURMarketing.com

DESIGN
Laura Zielinski

DISTRIBUTION
Penny Redmond

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J. DelSUR MARKETING GROUP

135 Goshen Rd. Ext., Suite 251
Rincon, GA 31326
(912) 295-5406
EffinghamMagazine.com

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.

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Celebrating Family


Jan Southern

We have some incredible families throughout Effingham County. Families who have been here for generations and those who have more recently made Effingham their home. Families who farmed the land, share their resources with others, go to church, become national athletes and scholars—all from this area.

I will admit. I have a soft spot for entrepreneurs and business leaders. I have worked with hundreds of them in my marketing career and I am always impressed by their positive attitudes, self-motivation and tenacity. Starting and running a business is not easy. To do this while also managing unique family dynamics simultaneously is not for the weak, I am sure.

In our third annual Families in Business issue, we share a few stories of family members working together at law firms, outdoors and even at home. As you read these stories you will understand that it isn't always easy, but it can be incredibly rewarding to work, day in and day out with family. Husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, parents and children—building careers and making memories. What a treasure! I am especially impressed with the Gehrke family who have encouraged their son Landon to pursue his passion for ducks and turn it into a business at the age of 12. Read his story on page 10. You will certainly be inspired.

I hope you enjoy this issue of *Effingham Magazine*. We have an incredible year of content for you in 2023. We look forward to sharing all the great stories of the people and organizations that make Effingham County such a lovely place to live, work and play. You can find them all at EffinghamMagazine.com.

Jan Southern

CEO/Publisher
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BEST HEALTH INSURANCE ADVISOR in Effingham
—2022—

Melissa McBride Stille

of Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage, LLC

Are you turning 65 and need help navigating through your options?



Melissa McBride Stille Works for Clients—Not the Insurance Company!

Are you turning 65 and thinking about retirement and don't know what to do? "Many people are trying to decide if they should retire and how that would impact their health insurance." says independent insurance agent Melissa McBride Stille, "If someone is 65 years old and wants to stop working, knowing their health care options ahead of that decision is crucial because there are far reaching consequences."

Melissa has been in the health insurance industry for 14 years and is the sole proprietor of Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage. She says, "DeWitt Insurance Agency has been in business since 1956. When I purchased the agency's health department, I incorporated it into my agency name to keep the continuity within the community." As a health insurance broker specializing in Medicare, she is dedicated to presenting her clients with the best health care options available.

She says at age 65 most people need to think about the pros and cons of Medicare options or continuing insurance through their employer. Don't stress over the paperwork she says, "All you need is to bring me is yourself and your current group benefits. Don't depend on your Human Resources department to help you because they are not insurance specialists. We can do a three way call between yourself, your HR dept and me so I can thoroughly assess your situation. Together we will optimize your benefits while tailoring them to your needs."

Melissa can also facilitate your Medicare application with the Social Security office. "There are many factors, particularly with Medicare Part B." Some scenarios involve penalties but they may not apply to you, that's why working with a Medicare specialist is critical to obtaining the best outcome.

Each client presents individual issues. You may have a spouse who is dependent on your benefits and too young for Medicare. Melissa will help you compare the cost of staying at your current position and using your employer benefits plan, versus retiring and having your spouse obtain health insurance through the marketplace. Perhaps your spouse has a chronic illness or is in an assisted living facility—these are important factors in your decision.

Step By Step Process

- Is Medicare Primary or Secondary
- Open enrollment periods
- Deductibles vs out of pocket
- Spousal Considerations
- All income levels need expert guidance

Melissa also works with Medicare recipients under 65, including those who have Medicare through Social Security Disability and with people using Affordable Care Act Marketplace insurance, and some group insurances.

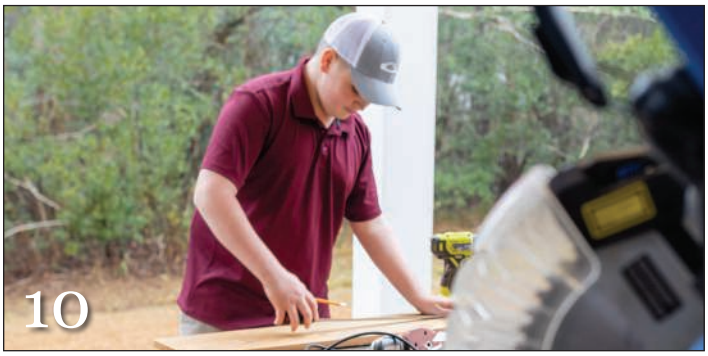
"I care about each and every client and do a review of everyone's health policies every year because there are so many changes annually," she says. "I like to simplify things and present you with your best options." She gives every client her cell number—it's in all of her advertising so that every client, even future clients, can feel comfortable reaching out to her. She says, "I work for my clients, not the insurance company."

If you have a question regarding Medicare or other health insurance options, give Melissa a call!

Stille-DeWitt Health Brokerage, LLC

Cell (912) 239-7119 | www.StilleYourAgent.com
Melissa@StilleYourAgent.com

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ABOUT THE COVER



Twelve year old Landon Gehrke's love for the outdoors inspired him to create a small business that supports the local Wood Duck population and allows him to live his motto—*Give Back More Than You Take.*

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LANDON GEHRKE: Giving Back More Than He Takes

Story by Cindy Reid | Photography by Emily Roscher

Twelve year old Landon Gehrke 's love for the outdoors has inspired him to create a small business that enables him to live his motto—*Give Back More Than You Take*. Not only is he learning valuable life skills, making money, and using his time productively, he is helping in a significant way to increase the Wood Duck population and contribute positively to conservation efforts through the south east.

And did you catch the fact that he is just 12 years old?

Ebenezer Creek Outdoors

What started as a project for his sixth grade Agriculture Class at South Effingham Middle School has become **Ebenezer Creek Outdoors**—Landon's company that builds and sells wooden boxes for nesting wood ducks. The company is named after Ebenezer Creek, which runs by the family's home.

Landon says he started building the wood duck boxes because "Fifty percent of all ducks harvested in Georgia are wood ducks but only forty percent of wood duck nests are successful every year. I loved ducks and wanted to help increase the population in my area."

Nesting wood ducks prefer trees that hang over water or are close to a water source. Trees with cavities are their usual nesting spots but they are becoming harder to find due to declining availability of habitat.

Luckily, the wood ducks will use wooden nest boxes built by people, something that started back in the 1930s.

"It is the perfect thing for me," says Landon. "I make them and sell them to people, and they put them out by lakes, ponds, and rivers."

Nesting season is February through June, but the boxes can be installed anytime during the year. Proper placement is important to ensure the ducks are as protected as possible. Wetlands, swamps, and creeks are the preferred locations, as they need to be facing open water but above the water line to avoid flooding.

Landon says the duck boxes protect hens and their clutches from nest





predators, especially raccoons and rat snakes. “A lot of things eat duck eggs so this way they are protected.”

And after the eggs hatch there is a curve cut in the box so the ducklings can climb out.

The ducklings are born with their feathers and leave the nest quickly as they are actually raised on the water. After the ducklings move out the boxes can be cleaned out and left in place to be reused the following season.

The Building Process

The first nesting boxes typically took about an hour to build, and Landon says, “It was a new thing to learn, but they weren’t too hard to make because I had a set of instructions.”

His dad Matt Gehrke (a teacher and coach at South Effingham High School) has been taking the opportunity to teach Landon woodworking and carpentry skills.

> “I loved ducks and wanted to help increase the population in my area.”

The boxes are made from either cedar or pine with a nontoxic sealer. Customers can order from an order form link on their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/ebenezercreekoutdoors. The boxes take a few days to build, and Landon says they typically ship out within seven to ten days.

He has shipped boxes throughout Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee and as far north as West Virginia and as far south as Florida. Currently all boxes are made to order per each customer and are only available online.

Family Assistance

Relatively new to the area, the Gehrke family moved from Mississippi to Georgia in June 2021 and Landon says he likes it here in Georgia due to all the

outdoors opportunities and the proximity to the beach. In many ways Ebenezer Creek Outdoors is a family project, with his folks pitching in as needed.

"My parents are helping me and guiding me as I build the boxes and make business decisions," says Landon.

His dad Matt helps with woodworking and his mother Ellen runs his Facebook page.

Matt says, "I knew Landon could do it and I anticipated it would take off, but this has exceeded my expectations. Landon is learning he can create his own career, that he doesn't have to be limited and it teaches him he can be successful on his own."

> "I knew Landon could do it and I anticipated it would take off, but this has exceeded my expectations"

Matt says Landon's success has inspired his little sister Olivia, 8, who is looking into starting a dog treat business of her own.

"We are proud of Landon, and I am personally pleased to be able to pass on woodworking skills to him," Matt says.

Landon says he really enjoys having his own business, especially because "I like spending more time with my family. "

Well Rounded

When he's not busy with school and his duck box business, Landon enjoys playing football, hunting, and studying military history. He says he works out almost every morning and, in fact, Landon's football travel team, the Renegades, became 12 U National Champions at the Thanksgiving Bowl in Gatlinburg TN in 2022. And as a Junior Hunter he recently bagged his first Bufflehead duck.

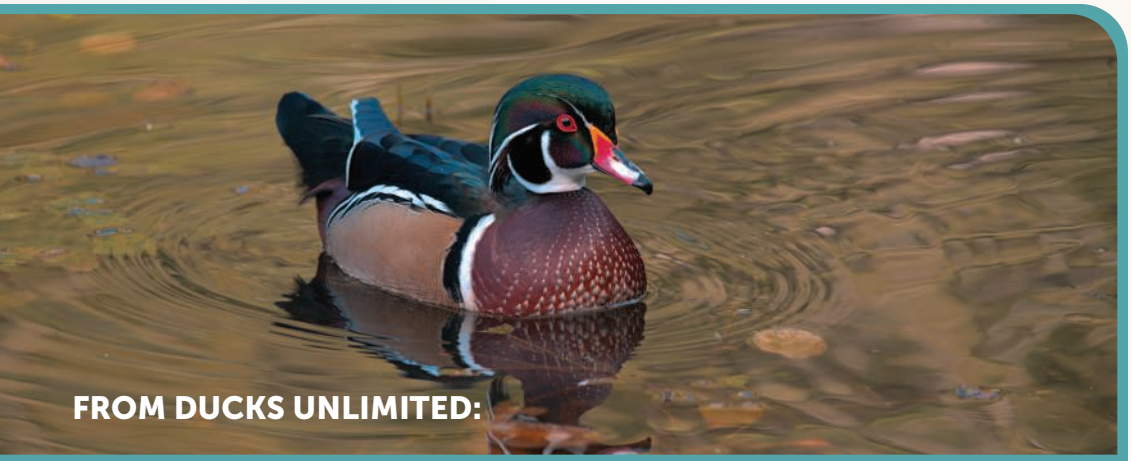
Although the project has moved past the classroom, Landon is still learning a lot of new skills. In addition to learning carpentry, he says he has been acquiring business skills such as customer service, budgeting, and everything else that comes with being a young entrepreneur—including being interviewed by a magazine!

Future expansion ideas include adding carpenter bee box traps, ECO apparel and being available in retail locations.

Most importantly, Landon's business exemplifies what is most important to him—to Give Back More Than You Take.

"Conservation is a big part of what Ebenezer Creek Outdoors is," Landon says. "I like conserving the duck population for future generations to hunt and to just enjoy being outdoors." ■

For more information visit: www.facebook.com/ebenezercreekoutdoors



FROM DUCKS UNLIMITED:

These wooden structures help boost local wood duck populations. Overharvesting, coupled with the destruction of bottomland habitats, drove these colorful birds to the brink of extinction by the early 20th century.

The recovery of the wood duck was also assisted by the advent of artificial nesting structures, or wood duck boxes. Wood duck boxes provide a man-made alternative, where hens can nest in relative safety from predators. The deployment of large numbers of nesting boxes can be used to help increase local or regional populations of wood ducks in areas where natural cavities are limited...wood duck boxes provide an excellent opportunity for anyone to become involved in wildlife management. (www.ducks.org)





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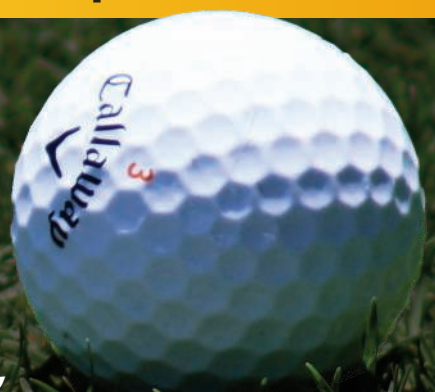
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WHAT'S OLD IS NEW AGAIN!

ReCreate It! Art Competition Showcases Repurposing and Upcycling While Fundraising for Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County

Savvy shoppers know that the best deals on furniture, home goods and surplus construction supplies are found at Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County's ReStore. Creative minds know that there are gems to be found that can be repurposed into something new.

The joy of upcycling—taking an old item and giving it new life with a coat of paint, some new upholstery or otherwise reusing its components—is the motivation for Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County's annual **ReCreate It! Art Competition**.

"We love seeing the creative ideas that our customers have executed with supplies from the ReStore," says ReStore manager Kait Rapp. "It's incredible!"

Guyton resident Linda Isber, who won the competition last year, repurposed a coffee table into a bench with the addition of some rustic cow-print fabric.

Rincon resident Bill Gammon has entered the competition each year, and last year he created some vibrant daffodils using some light covers from a ceiling fan to form the centers of the flower. In 2021, he crafted a charming dog out of chicken wire.

Other past entries have included a baseball-themed dresser that would hit a home run in a boy's bedroom, an Art Deco-inspired headboard paying homage to Audrey Hepburn and an outdoor wrought iron table that was covered by a mosaic top.

> "We love seeing the creative ideas that our customers have executed with supplies from the ReStore. It's incredible!"

Anyone can enter their artwork into the competition and there is no entry fee. Entrants can sign an item out of the ReStore on the honor system with the stipulation of returning it in a repurposed state. The only requirement: at least 51 percent of the supplies used in the final product must be sourced from the ReStore. After that, the sky's the limit!

Entries will be accepted April 13-15, 2023 and ReStore customers will vote on their favorite pieces from April 15-22, 2023. While voting is open, customers can also place a bid on their favorite piece as a fundraiser for Habitat for Humanity of Effingham County.

Visit the ReStore during business hours (Thursday-Saturday, 9am-5pm) to stroll through the aisles and to get the supplies you need.

They are constantly receiving new donations of gently used furniture, household items, appliances and construction materials. With every visit, you'll find something new to inspire you. Happy ReCreating!

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KYLE DAVIDSON & AVERY SIMMONS
Brothers Find Redemption *Together*

Story by Claire Sandow



Brothers Kyle Davidson and Avery Simmons have been down a hard road in their lives. Born six years apart to the same mother but different fathers, they are living proof that no matter your background, you can make something of yourself.

Kyle spent a total of five years in prison and came out ready to turn his life around and Avery also did some time in jail in his past.

"I had to go learn a lesson for a couple of years," Avery said. "My past life of criminal activity was a dead end road and I had to give it my all and figure things out."

A criminal record makes finding employment difficult for many people, but Kyle and Avery both found work with Halleluyah Restoration and by doing so learned the ropes of the fencing business. Within a few months of working with Halleluyah, Avery made a strong impression on owner Marc Pack and was promoted to a foreman in record time.

"Avery did that by working every opportunity I gave him," Marc said. "He deserved the opportunity to get out there and see what he could do on his own."

Avery and Kyle bring out the best in each other, something that Marc has noticed as the brothers evolved as workers and as entrepreneurs.

"Working with Avery helped Kyle because he knew that this was something his little brother had already decided he was going to take to the next level," Marc said. "They make a good team because Avery really enjoys getting in the dirt, working hard and seeing the job through and Kyle has a good energy that people trust and relate to. The guy's authentic."

Redeemed Fencing

In 2020, the brothers bought a truck and started Redeemed Fencing, a name that holds a lot of meaning for them.

"God is a redeemer," said Kyle. "He gave us another chance and we redeemed ourselves...Because of the life we used to live, no one ever thought I would turn out to be anything."

From day one, word of mouth was their primary form of advertising. Beautiful finished products and experience in a variety of types of fence installation gave Redeemed Fencing a solid reputation.

From wood, vinyl, aluminum and chain link, their crew could handle it all. Each job they did piqued the interest of new customers, but building a business from the ground up was not without challenges.

"I don't think I slept for nine months," Kyle said. "Every day is a strain when you're trying to start a business and I ran through every penny I had."

The brothers worked nonstop, even through the night, to complete jobs. But they kept going, motivated by their family ties. Through the tough times, Kyle and Avery found that going through it together made things easier.

"We could be in two places at once because I knew what he was thinking and he knew what I was thinking," Kyle said.

"What I enjoy most about working with my brother is you've got somebody you can depend on," Avery said. "You have somebody who's going to be totally honest with you."

A Turning Point

In 2021, Redeemed Fencing completed a job that was a turning point for their business. They completed an estimate for a woman who needed a fence to pass the home safety check to be a foster parent. Because of her neighborhood's requirements a specific type of fence was required, which would have been difficult for her to afford.

Kyle and Avery were moved by her story and donated the materials and labor to install the fence for her. That leap of faith helped their business grow to new heights.



Left to right: Kelli and Kyle Davidson and Avery and Dorothy Simmons.

> "Kyle and Avery took a risk....They've put in the hard work and they sowed the seeds in the community to reap the rewards."

"Kyle and Avery took a risk, and I think it's panned out pretty well for them," Marc said. "They've put in the hard work and they sowed the seeds in the community to reap the rewards."

As Kyle put it, "I can get paid chasing someone else's dreams or I can get paid trying to chase my own."

Dealing with Life's Challenges and Changes

Their life experience has given them a thick skin to handle the ups and downs of running their own business. Kyle and Avery have persevered through their challenges and found their own path to success.

"The only person who can make you fail is the person you stare at when you brush your teeth," Kyle said. "You've got to be determined, and you've got to be able to deal with the nos."

This year, Kyle and Avery have split their business to pursue new projects, but are supportive of each other. Kyle continues to operate under Redeemed Gutters and Fencing, indicative of the expanded services he now offers. Avery is still doing fencing, operating under the name Faithful Concepts. He chose the name in appreciation of his journey through the years.

"The Lord has opened up a lot of things in my life. As long as I've remained faithful He has provided," Avery said.

The future looks bright for both Redeemed Gutters and Fencing and Faithful Concepts.

While fences are often used to create dividing lines between properties, fences have brought these brothers closer. They have overcome a difficult childhood, incarceration and loss and made their own way through by working together. ■

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What makes an insurance agent special? A passion for helping others and a commitment to the community he or she serves. That is how **Ashley Boyette**—State Farm agent views her role. She is a small business owner and State Farm agent serving all of Effingham County.

Ashley Boyette and her team understand that their clients need to find the best and most affordable insurance and financial services possible. Specializing in all types of insurance and financial planning, they treat every customer like they would treat their own families. They let the needs of the customer guide the recommendations and advice they provide. They strive to protect families and help them plan for the future.

Ashley says, **"I love this community because it is very welcoming. We are also made up of organizations that want to help others. Whether it is children's sports programs or the Manna House, we all come together to help each other. I am very proud to be part of this great community."**

Ashley also loves spending time with her own family. She has two little boys and loves watching them learn karate. She also loves the outdoors and even doing yard work!

If you need insurance, financial planning advice or just a friendly face, stop by **Ashley Boyette's** office. You will be glad you did.

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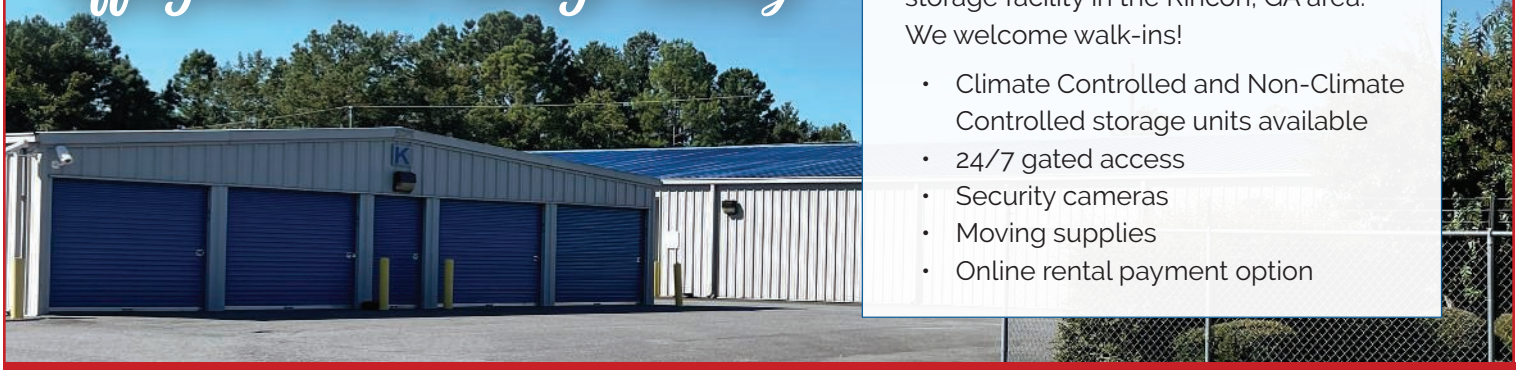




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"We represent our clients fully and carefully to get a successful resolution for them," he states.

Mickey been privileged to work alongside his wife Kim – the firm's chief financial officer for a long time. He felt especially honored when his daughter Kelsey Kicklighter Bartlett joined the firm. Mickey's extensive experience combined with Kelsey's fresh approach and energy have proven to be a winning formula.



Mickey Kicklighter

Mickey began his career as an assistant district attorney before becoming chief assistant district attorney for the Atlantic Judicial Circuit, which is responsible for prosecuting felony criminal cases. He gained insight working on the plaintiff side, especially on personal injury cases, and the defense side, representing clients faced with various claims; thus, he has amassed a plethora of experience.

"I've had [over] 75 jury trials and hundreds and hundreds of bench trials. Our firm goes to court; a lot of firms don't," Mickey notes.

Kelsey Kicklighter Bartlett



Kelsey was raised in Rincon. She and her husband Trey are the proud parents of Beau, their precious seven-month-old son. After practicing law for five years, Kelsey joined the firm this past September. She, too, attended Mercer University. She initially sought a career in psychology, however, the summer following her senior year changed her plans.

"I interned at an inpatient psychiatric facility. I felt there was a 'revolving door' aspect of care given to those suffering from severe mental illness. After that experience, my college advisor suggested I think about law school. I decided to take the LSAT," Kelsey says.

Besides obtaining a bachelor's degree in psychology, she attended the Mercer School of Law, graduating cum laude with her Juris Doctorate.

Kelsey brought extensive defense experience to Kicklighter Law, as she had represented businesses and insurance companies in numerous personal injury cases. Kelsey currently focuses on representing plaintiffs' wrongful death cases and handling serious personal injury cases – those involving medical malpractice, premises liability, defamation, government liability, etc.

Kelsey has co-authored several legal publications. In 2021, she was granted the Bert Hummel Award by the Young Lawyers Division of the State Bar of Georgia.

Experts & Expertise

Mickey appreciates his team, which includes another attorney – Brian "BJ" Fussell, Jr.

"We have two good, young attorneys. It's fun chatting about cases and strategizing," Mickey comments.

Kelsey feels that BJ is an "integral part of the team."

"Being able to work with him and learn from him is enriching," Kelsey remarks.

The team also includes three paralegals: Mandy Hargrove, senior paralegal, along with Lisa Reeves and Colleen Eddy; Anna Bragg is the firm's legal assistant.

"All the members of the team work hard for our clients. I am thankful that the whole team has made me feel welcome," Kelsey states.

Kicklighter Law handles civil and criminal litigation, specializing in personal injury cases. Whether car accidents or medical malpractice claims, Kicklighter is committed to delivering optimal results. The firm handles construction litigation, including on-the-job injuries and compensation disputes, and provides assistance in both family law and criminal law cases.

Commitment to their profession and to family.

Mickey and Kelsey enjoy practicing together; they are committed to maintaining the firm's great culture.

"I get to learn from the man who I credit, along with my mother, for me being where I am today. My father cares for his clients, friends and family while putting God first. My mother has taught me to be a shoulder for others, a listening ear and a warm hug," she says.

As the team persists to provide their clients "caring, comprehensive and personalized legal services," Mickey and Kelsey are a testament to the power of family and the joy that can come from working together.

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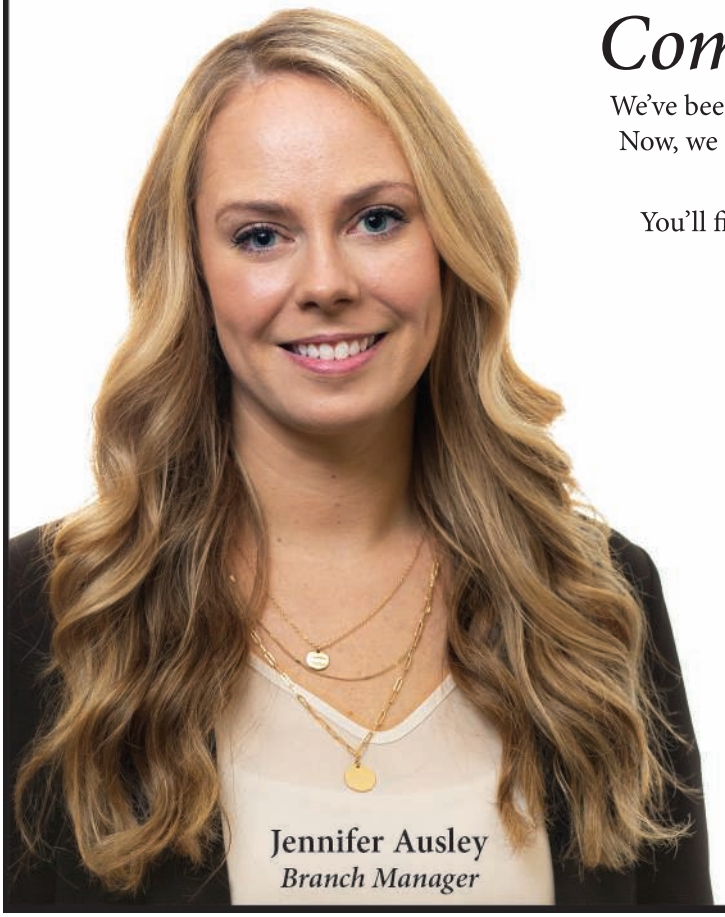


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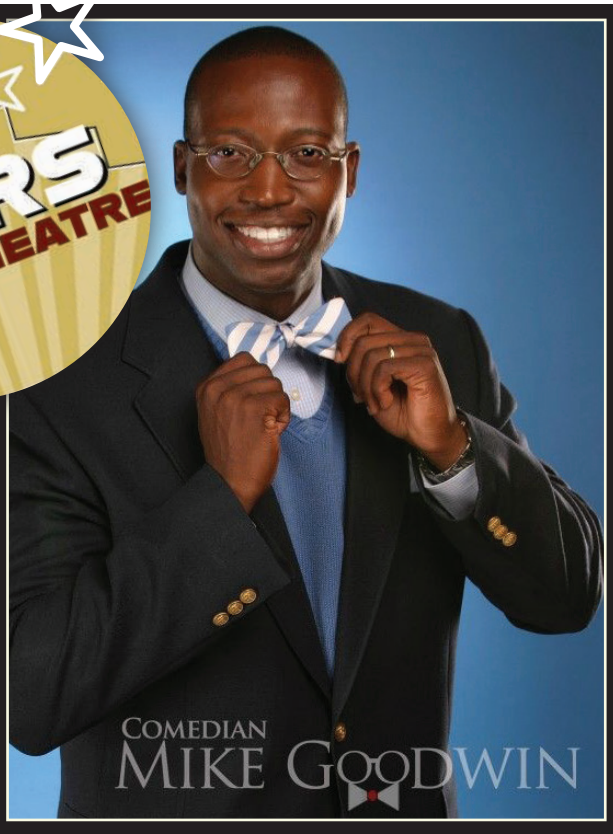
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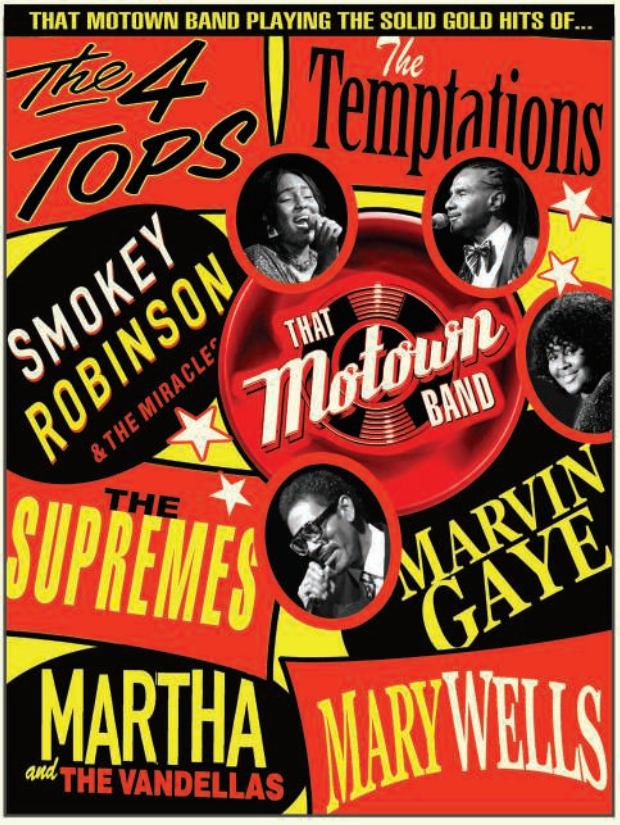
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Lawrence Martin's path to entrepreneurship has been nothing short of phenomenal. Lawrence, the owner of SunHaven Outdoors, is a retired law enforcement officer, serving his community for nearly 25 years, retiring only after experiencing circumstances that changed the trajectory of his life.

A Life of Service and Perseverance

While apprehending an offender years ago, Lawrence's neck and lower back were severely injured. He endured a couple of neck surgeries, including a partial neck fusion, along with nerve damage repair.

Upon completing therapy, the officer was anxious to go back to work. About a year later, a second field-related injury made conditions worse. Surgeons then wanted to perform a full neck fusion. Lawrence was informed of the possibility of neck paralysis if the second surgery was performed; physicians were unsure if he would be able to walk again following the procedure.

However, if the corrective surgery was an overall success, they still doubted that he would live a life free of the pain. He refused to take those risks. Lawrence underwent extensive rehab and defied all the odds. Though he has endured the pain associated with the injury, Lawrence feels blessed to have the ability to walk around each day.

"I still wanted the opportunity to walk and move. The benefits of not doing the surgery outweighed the benefits of doing it," he says.

Understanding the physical risks of going back to his regular job as a law enforcement officer, doctors refused to release Lawrence to work in the field again. Though he was not prepared to leave the career he loved, he was compelled to retire early.

Lawrence has endured the pain of his injuries for a long time, but he is still thankful for every blessing in his life.

"It has changed me for the better. I thank the Lord that I can get up and walk every morning. I didn't look at life as brittle. It opened my eyes to how much we take for granted. We should be thankful for what the Lord has given us each day. I have a new perspective on life—I'm grateful for the big things, like my family, but also the little things. I'm blessed to be able to walk or even eat and brush my teeth on my own," he says.

Prior to his service as an officer of the law, Lawrence served as a youth minister at his church; he enjoyed being involved in ministry.

"I loved it. I'm involved in the church to this day. I just felt that law enforcement was my calling. It was something I was always interested in. It gave me an additional opportunity to help people. I think I inherited that caring and giving nature from my mom and dad. I'd like to think that I've passed it on to my two sons as well," Lawrence says.

Lawrence's two sons—Matthew and Jamison—followed in his footsteps. His youngest, Jamison, is involved in ministry while Matthew is a police officer.

"Both my boys have big hearts, and they love helping people," Lawrence says.

It is a Family Affair

Lawrence opened the doors to his family business SunHaven Outdoors this past October. SunHaven is an all-in-one outdoor store.

Lawrence and his family are proud to be an asset to their community. His wife Raina has championed his efforts from day one.

"My wife has embraced it. She has supported me 100% through it all," he says.

> "I have a new perspective on life—I'm grateful for the big things, like my family, but also the little things. I'm blessed to be able to walk or even eat and brush my teeth."

Matthew and Jamison were two of his biggest supporters. Lawrence takes pride in working alongside them both. He also appreciates having the assistance of his two daughters-in-law: Madison (Matthew's wife) and Rebekah (Jamison's wife). He is grateful for all the tireless efforts of his brother and his sister-in-law: Bernie and Kimberly Sheets.

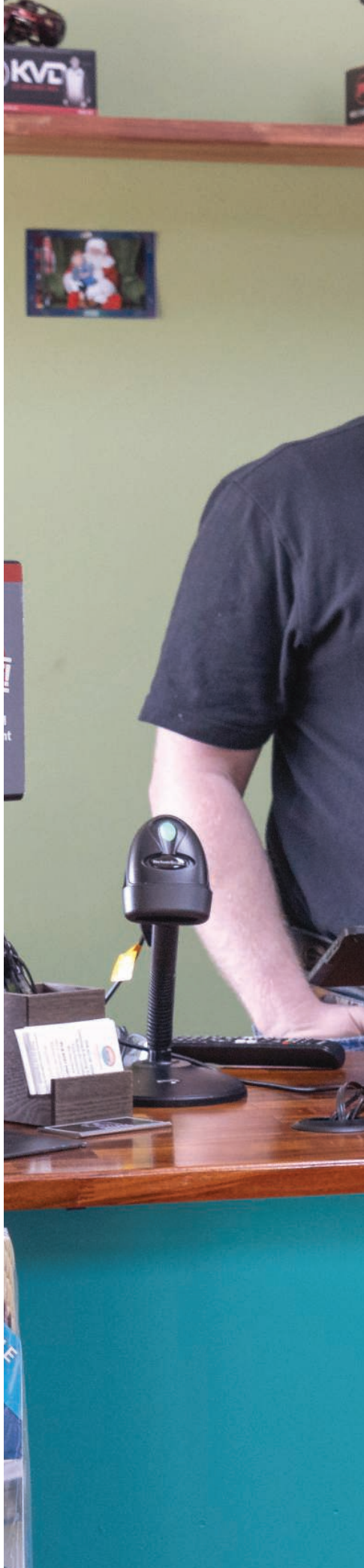
Moreover, Lawrence is privileged that his nephew Ashley Sheets, a marketing professional, is part of the SunHaven team; Ashley leads all marketing initiatives and designed the company's logo.

In addition, Lawrence is a proud granddad whose only grandchild, his little granddaughter Moriah, is the real heart of the company. The two-year-old bundle of joy keeps everyone on their toes.

"She's our #1 saleslady," he jokes.

Lawrence and the whole SunHaven family loves her to pieces—it is certainly a family affair.

"My family is my number one inspiration. Without them, I wouldn't be where I am today, and there's no way we would be here without everybody working together," he adds.





LAWRENCE MARTIN:
Local Business is a Family Affair

Story by Claire Sandow | Photography by Leidi Lester



SunHaven Outdoors

Lawrence recalls having to travel to nearby cities to buy certain camping, boating, fishing or camper-related parts and accessories. His daughter-in-law Madison encouraged him to do something about that inconvenience; after all, she knew that he was one of the most competent industry aficionados around.

After prayer, discussions with his family and a thorough market analysis, Lawrence decided to take a leap of faith; over time, SunHaven was born.

"We did a market analysis. We wanted to know how we could help the community, which was one of our biggest missions. So, we were able to make a business and make a living by serving our community," he says.

The family-owned and operated outdoor store provides products and services for nearly all camping, boating or fishing needs, and it is conveniently right within the Effingham community. No more spending time traveling to other areas just to buy a $20 part or waiting a week for online dealers to ship an order.

"We're a one-stop shop for your camping, boating and fishing needs. We're your all-in-one store. You can come right here and get everything you need. Everybody's time is valuable. Not only are you saving the fuel it takes to travel, but you're saving your time as well," Lawrence says.

Indeed, much of the benefit is the convenience of having it all right within your own backyard.

The SunHaven team is driven to provide their customers with exceptional service. Even in the rare times that the store does not have an item, they are able to obtain it in a timely manner.

"We're here to help. We're working hard every day to provide customers with the best service to make them feel that they're part of the family when they walk into the store. You need that good service. If you lose that trust from the community, it's hard to get it back," he says.

> "We're working hard every day to provide customers with the best service to make them feel that they're part of the family when they walk into the store."

The team knows that quality always counts, so SunHaven only offers top-of-the-line merchandise. It does not sell used or refurbished items.

"We want to supply new, top-quality products at affordable prices—those that everybody knows and trusts. We have every top brand in the boating, fishing and camping industries in stock. It's hard to sell products that are unproven," Lawrence states.

SunHaven offers an array of outdoor goods—reels, boating parts or tents, to name a few, along with a variety of accessories (chairs, backpacks, outdoor apparel, etc.).

The line of products includes brands such as: Camco, Coleman and Abu Garcia. The retailer also provides ENO hammocks and accessories, Nine Line Apparel, along with Black Rifle Coffee items.

"We know that when a product leaves these doors that we have sold the best there is on the market," Lawrence says.

As another added convenience for customers, SunHaven offers mobile service and repair.

Dreams Fulfilled

Lawrence remembers two of his biggest role models: his mom Bernice and his dad C.M. He is confident that he inherited his strength and determination from them. They were also a lot of the inspiration behind his business.

"I always wanted to open up a business once I retired, and my mom and dad also dreamed of opening a business of their own when they were alive. In some ways, I feel that I'm fulfilling it for them as well," Lawrence says.

Looking ahead, Lawrence hopes to open additional stores in nearby areas in the coming years.

In the meantime, he is truly grateful for the opportunity to grow his business, alongside his family, in the community where he feels privileged to live.

"We love Effingham, and we are happy to call it home," he says. ■


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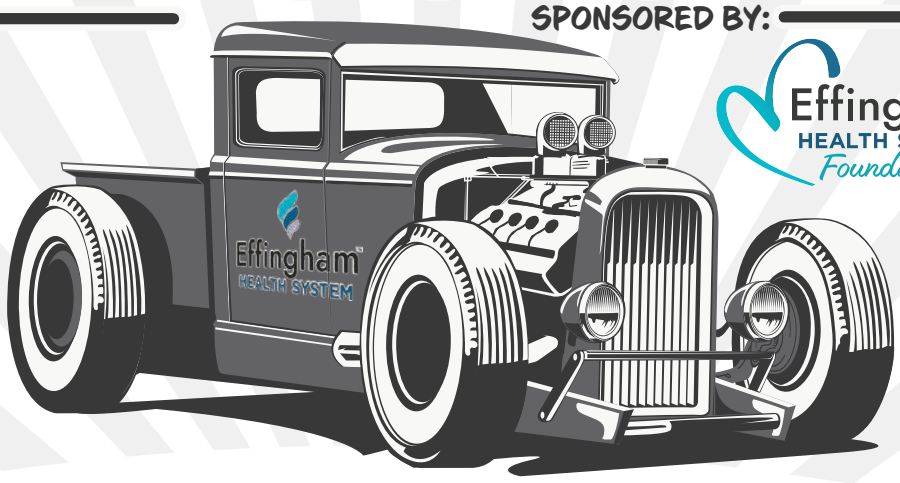
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Family Owned Businesses ARE A LABOR OF LOVE

Story by Cindy Reid

A family owned business can be the ideal work/life situation or a fractured family nightmare. The same rules of business apply but there is an added overlay of family expectations, tensions, and history that may or may not work in your favor.

Have you seen "Yellowstone?" "Succession?" Or how about "The Crown?" Family businesses are grist for the drama mill because they have it all—booms and busts, alliances, and feuds. Of course, in real life things are usually a lot calmer and most family businesses run just fine.

They certainly are popular. There are 5.5 million family owned businesses (FOB) in the United States, which account for 57% of America's gross domestic product and 63% of our workforce. (US Chamber of Commerce).

Although they are responsible for over 70% of new job growth, only 30% of these businesses survive into the second generation and just 12% carry over to the third. (www.entrepreneur.com)

You can have the greatest family in the world but evidently that doesn't guarantee a great FOB. Business experts agree that the key to any successful family business is using basic good business practices such as clear communication, sound financial planning, and employee accountability. Within a FOB these issues can be difficult to navigate due to history, emotional baggage, a fear of disagreements, and lack of business experience.

Family Owned Business Tips

The number one best practice is to **COMMUNICATE**. Say it clearly, say it often and say it again. Just because you are related doesn't make you mind readers. Especially if it is hard, say what needs to be said to the appropriate person. Without clear and constant communication, it is guaranteed problems will grow and resentment will build. And don't rely on texts. Have regular meetings to air out issues and celebrate accomplishments.

Set **EXPECTATIONS**. Guidelines regarding roles and responsibilities need to be made, written down and followed up on. Don't make the mistake of assuming people will somehow just know what to do. They won't. This applies for both family and employees who aren't related. When roles are defined, you can now hold each other accountable.

Give each other **SPACE**. Be careful not to micromanage. There's a line between supervision and interfering. Just because you are Mom, Dad or Uncle doesn't mean you get to aggravate.

Hire by **ABILITY**, not obligation. Not every family member is CEO material. Being in a FOB is a stepping stone for some, for others it's a dream come true. Look past traditional gender roles. Pushing family members to work in positions they don't want will only lead to problems, both for the business and as a family.

Be **PROFESSIONAL**. Leave work at work and home at home. This is a difficult one. You may need to make a family vow to enjoy time outside of work without actually talking about work. You don't want business issues to become personal issues. The same applies in reverse. Leave the home stuff at home. No one at work wants to hear your family arguments or disagreements.

Embrace your **STRENGTHS** as a family. There is a reason you work together. There is a deep level of love, trust and values that you share that cannot be duplicated. Unite as one behind your common goal and together you will be unstoppable.

Starting a Small Business as a Family

Some FOBs are couples in business together as a unit of two. For them the idea of working together side by side is very attractive because they get to have a job they love and share it with the person they love. Working towards their common goals is very







satisfying. As good as this can be, there are definitely pros and cons:

Pros

- More time together
- Understand each other's professional life
- Ability to control your schedules
- Share child and elder care

Cons

- All you do is talk about work
- No personal space
- Financial predicament if your industry is badly affected.
- You will take your work home

Open an Airbnb, a restaurant, a retail store, or work together in your chosen field and you will soon see if this is for you. Some couples thrive and others realize it's not for them.

Providing a ready-made job and income for their offspring is also attractive to many parents. Trades such as plumbers, electricians, and building contractors traditionally bring the next generation into the original businesses. But there are other options that don't require such a high skill set or certified training that can also become a successful family business.

Sometimes the adult runs the day to day, hiring their teenage or young adult children as labor, and sometimes it is a genuine partnership. Good examples of small businesses that can be run as a family include residential and commercial cleaning, auto detailing (mobile and stationary), child care, online sales, elder care, personal concierge service, and petting sitting. Some just need a cell phone and transportation to get started, making it an ideal way to test out the FOB concept without a huge financial commitment.

"Trades such as plumbers, electricians, and building contractors traditionally bring the next generation into the original businesses. But there are other options that don't require such a high skill set or certified training."

You're much more likely to succeed in a business with a partner than without one. Entrepreneurs who have succeeded by pooling their strengths far outnumber those romantic figures—the lone entrepreneurs who have triumphed over all odds. *Inc. Magazine*'s annual list of the hundred fastest-growing companies typically shows that partners founded about two-thirds of them.

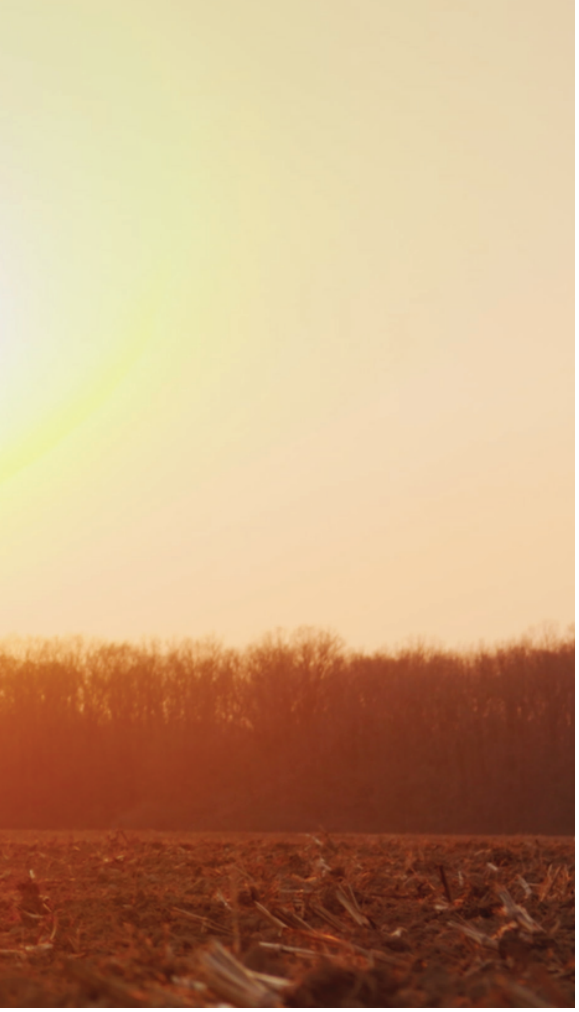
Every year, partnerships likewise dominate *Entrepreneur's* annual list of the "hottest" companies. The vast majority of high-performance companies are started by people with partners. (David Gage, *The Partnership Charter*)

Success Stories

Many famous companies are in fact a FOB. A few may surprise you...

Bigelow Tea: Ruth Bigelow started brewing and selling her own specialty tea in 1945. Bigelow Tea now has an annual revenue of $200 million and remains a privately held company. Granddaughter Cindi Bigelow is president and CEO.

Chick-fil-A: Founded by S. Truett Cathy in 1946, the company is currently the third-largest fast food chain in the



U.S. The company has remained within the family's control with Truett's sons serving as the CEO and executive vice president.

Ford Motor Company: Started by Henry Ford in 1903, the company is the second largest automaker in the U.S. and the fifth largest in the world. In 2019, the company brought in an annual revenue of $156 billion. The Ford family owns a 40% stake in the company and is still actively involved in the business.

Walmart: Sam Walton opened the first Walmart store in 1962 in Bentonville, Arkansas and today it is the largest family business company in the world, with sales of more than $500 billion. The Walton family continues to run the company.

Other successful family owned businesses in the United States are Berkshire Hathaway, Cargill, Dell Technologies, Oracle, Mars, Tyson Foods, Viacom CBS, Virgin Group, The Gap, The Estee Lauder Companies, Las Vegas Sands Corp., and the Hearst Corp.

So obviously it can be done and done very successfully. Like most things, you won't know until you try so if that is what you really want, make a plan and go for it. It just might end up being the best decision of your life! ■

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In October, Wiley's welcomed **Horton's General Store**, owned by Detra's sister, Donna Horton and family friend, Tammy Leggett. Come in for some fresh sausage, jerky, pork skins and other local products and gifts.



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It all began when owner Bonnie J. Smith had the opportunity to expand her massage business from one room to a full storefront in Guyton. With the expanded space came the potential to offer additional services. So she reached out to friends Winny Barnes and Alicja Colon to build a trifecta of businesses unique to Guyton.

"I'm the only massage therapist in Guyton, and until now, there was no esthetician," Bonnie says. "The area is growing, so it's a good time to offer different services in the community."

Winny is the esthetician of the trio and owner of **Your Esthetics Fix Health & Beauty Studio**. She will offer a selection of holistic treatments including facials, dermaplaning, henna eyebrow tinting and other esthetic services for both men and women. Winny prides her work on helping others unveil the best version of themselves!

Alicja is an established photographer with more than 15 years of experience. Her business, **Alicja Colon Photography**, specializes in capturing her subjects' beauty through bridal, portrait and boudoir photography.

"The three of us are ecstatic about it," Bonnie says. "I've always dreamed of having a storefront on a busy street, and it's definitely happening now."

Since opening B Renewed in 2019, Bonnie has built a following of clients who refer to her as "The Knot Whisperer" and a "miracle worker." She offers a variety of massage services, including deep tissue, therapeutic and hot stone massage.

Bonnie will continue to operate the Rincon location of B Renewed in addition to the Guyton location. She will be in Rincon Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Fridays and Guyton on Mondays and Thursdays.

The three Guyton businesses will be fully operational in early February.

Stay tuned for cross-promotional packages that make it easy for customers to treat themselves to a self-care experience without leaving Effingham County!



Bonnie J. Smith



Winny Barnes



Alicja Colon, Alicjabeauty.com

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Staying Healthy During Cold & Flu Season

By Kerri Dodson, MNT, MCHWC, Master Nutrition Therapist



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

It is that time of year again—cough and flu season. Have you ever wondered why some people never seem to get sick? Even when everyone around them falls, they are fine? Is it the seed or the terrain? Is it the virus or the host? Let's talk about it.

Most of our immune system (70-80%) is found in our gut. There is a link between your nutrition, lifestyle, microbiome (bacteria found in your intestines) and immune system. If you understand the relationship between them, you can build a strong shield against viruses.

"Good" bacteria help you digest food, maintain the integrity of your gut lining (so you don't have leaky gut), crowd out harmful pathogens and help your immune system distinguish between friend and foe. The microbiome is constantly changing, responding dramatically to the shifts in your diet, stress and lifestyle. Dietary changes do not just alter the composition of your gut bacteria but they also affect which of your disease-fighting genes get turned on or off which will influence your susceptibility to infection.

What you eat is incredibly important to your overall health. Think about it, is it cold and flu season or is it overeating, processed sugar, over-indulging in alcohol season?

The bacteria in your gut protects you by regulating your immune system to make sure you have the appropriate response when you encounter a virus. The strength of your immune system is dependent on the diversity of your microbiome. Those who tend to get sick often or who get severe viral infections often lack certain helpful bacterial species that are essential for regulating their immune response.

Scientists also know that specific bacteria in your intestines play a role in promoting health or promoting illness. Just as *Escherichia coli* helps synthesize Vitamin K, *Akkermansia* helps regulate glucose control. *Pseudomonas aeruginosa* overgrowth can cause ear infections. Therefore, proper ratios of both good and bad bacteria will facilitate a health gut microbiome and boost your immune system.



How Can You Keep Your Microbiome Robust?

There are several ways you can do this. First and foremost, only take antibiotics if it is necessary. Antibiotics not only kill the bad stuff but also kill the beneficial bacteria in your gut, which will allow for the overgrowth of bad bacteria. It takes your gut microbiome seven months to recover from one round of oral antibiotics, and that is assuming you are doing all the right things to help it along.

Secondly, eat foods that are high in fiber. The good bacteria love to feed on fiber, which will help make them more robust. Fruits, vegetables, beans and legumes all contain wonderful fiber. We know that if the good bacteria, *Faecalibacterium prausnitzii* is robust, you will have a significant decreased risk of getting sick from a virus if you come in contact with it.

Thirdly, eat foods high in polyphenols. Polyphenols reduce inflammation and protect us from oxidative stress. Polyphenols also help good bacteria such as *Akkermensia* grow. Foods high in polyphenols include blueberries, cherries, pomegranates, blackberries and spinach.

Reduce your sugar intake along with your alcohol intake. Sugar is inflammatory and depletes your body of vital nutrients such as magnesium. Alcohol can decrease the intestinal barrier contributing to leaky gut.

Lastly, reduce processed foods. We all know this by now. Processed foods are fake foods and lead to inflammation and chronic disease.

How I Can Help as a Nutrition Therapist

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More Than Pest Control

Darrell Dasher

Branch Manager, Rincon Office

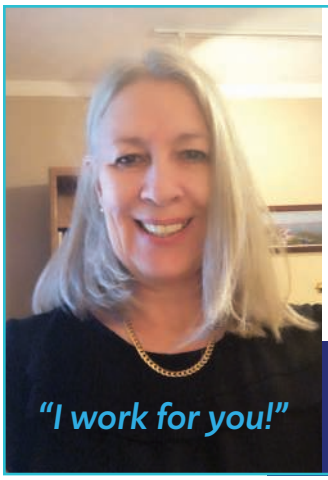


Darrell Dasher grew up in the Sand Hill area, so managing the Rincon office of Yates-Astro really is "home" for him. He gives back to his hometown by officiating sports events for all age groups in and around Effingham County.

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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EFFINGHAM Happenings



The Effingham County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the Grand Reopening of Horton's General Store inside Wiley's Home Center, at 1202 N. Columbia.



The Effingham County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Parker's Kitchen, at 4440 Highway 17 S.



The Effingham County Chamber of Commerce held a ribbon cutting ceremony for Elevated Hair Studio and Beauty Bar, 907 Lisa St, Suite A, in Rincon on Friday, November 18. Owner Tawny Price and her team offers professional hair and body services, as well as a clothing boutique, in a comfortable and beautiful space that allows each client to feel at ease. They were joined by family, friends, Andrea Allsbrook from Ms. Jean's Restaurant and chamber Ambassador Alex Hansbarger of Sherman and Hemstreet Real Estate.

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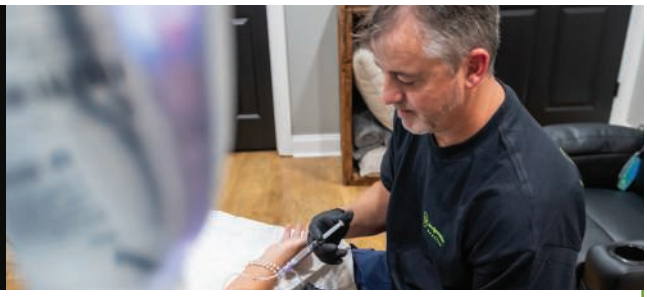
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About Dr. Jan Southern

Dr. Jan Southern has helped more than 100 organizations have greater success and business growth.

Her 32 years in marketing has focused on strategy, branding, digital advertising and communications for clients within the healthcare, e-commerce, retail, technology, lifestyle, service trades, and other industries.

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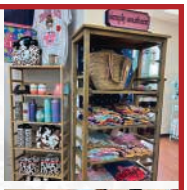
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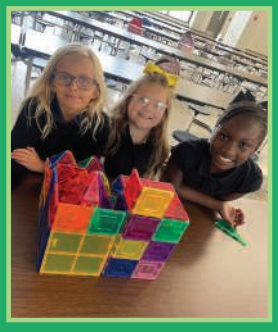
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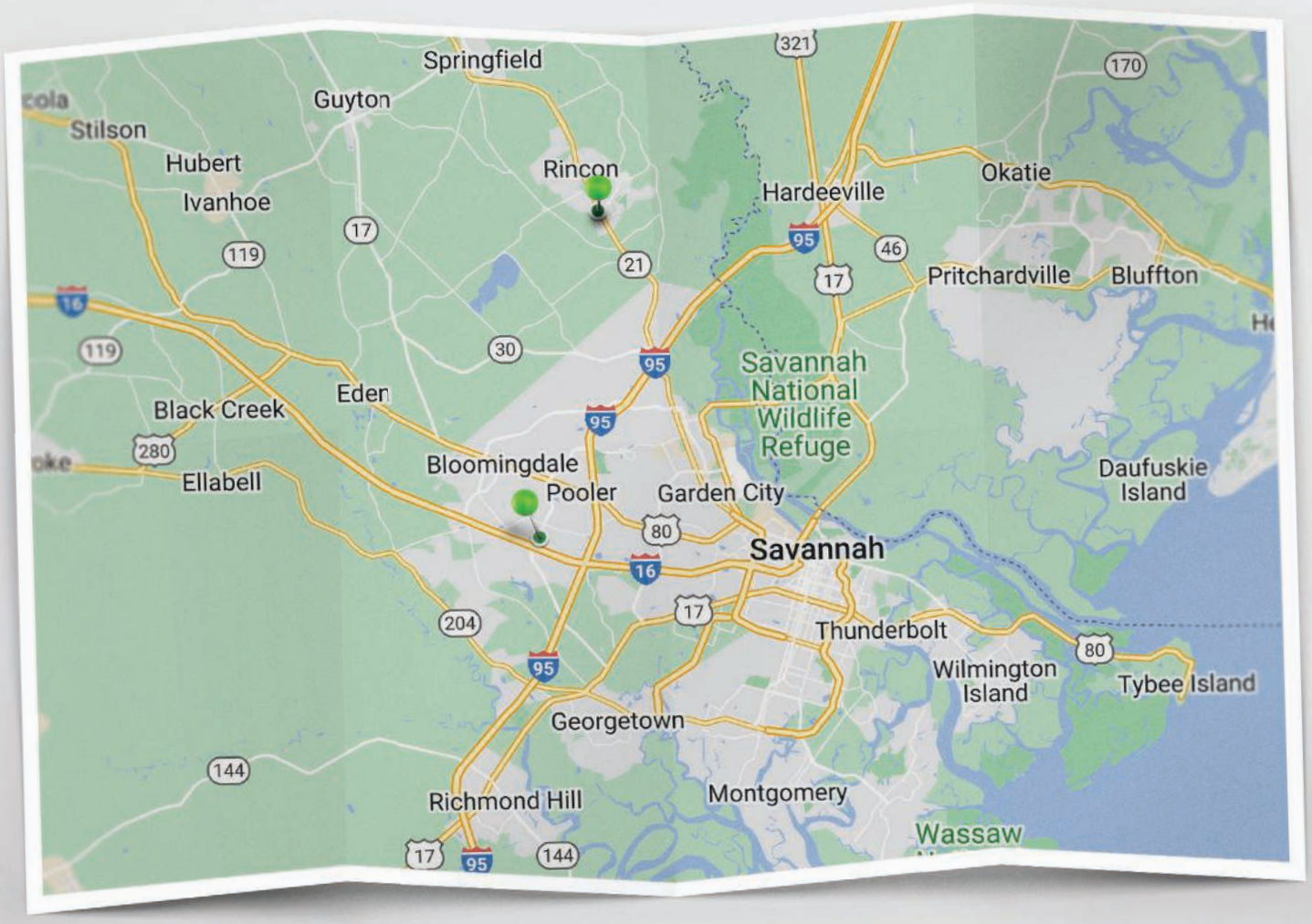
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